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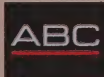
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editorial

Bad language

As disabled people we've always been in danger of being defined by language that is born out of a fear or, at best, a lack of understanding of what we are.

In little more than a generation we have gone from being "invalids" to being mentally, physically or visually "handicapped".

“‘Disabled’ isn’t a word that describes us: rather it describes what is done to us by society. It is society and the barriers it puts in our way that disable us, not our impairments”

There was a terrible time when we were “challenged”. There have been flirtations with calling us “impaired” (in our hearing, mobility and sight). And there have been and still are those who prefer to have us as “people with disabilities” or the totally obfuscatory “PWDs”.

Meanwhile, many of us are at our happiest when we're out and proud as disabled people. But now it feels like the whole linguistic roundabout is setting off on yet another circumlocution.

Two non-disabled presenters on a recent radio discussion were keen to explore with my disabled co-contributor their belief that the word “disabled” just wouldn't do. They argued that it places too much emphasis on our inability. With respect – no, actually with no respect at all – they've entirely missed the point, that point being that “disabled” is not a word that describes us: rather it describes what is done to us by society.

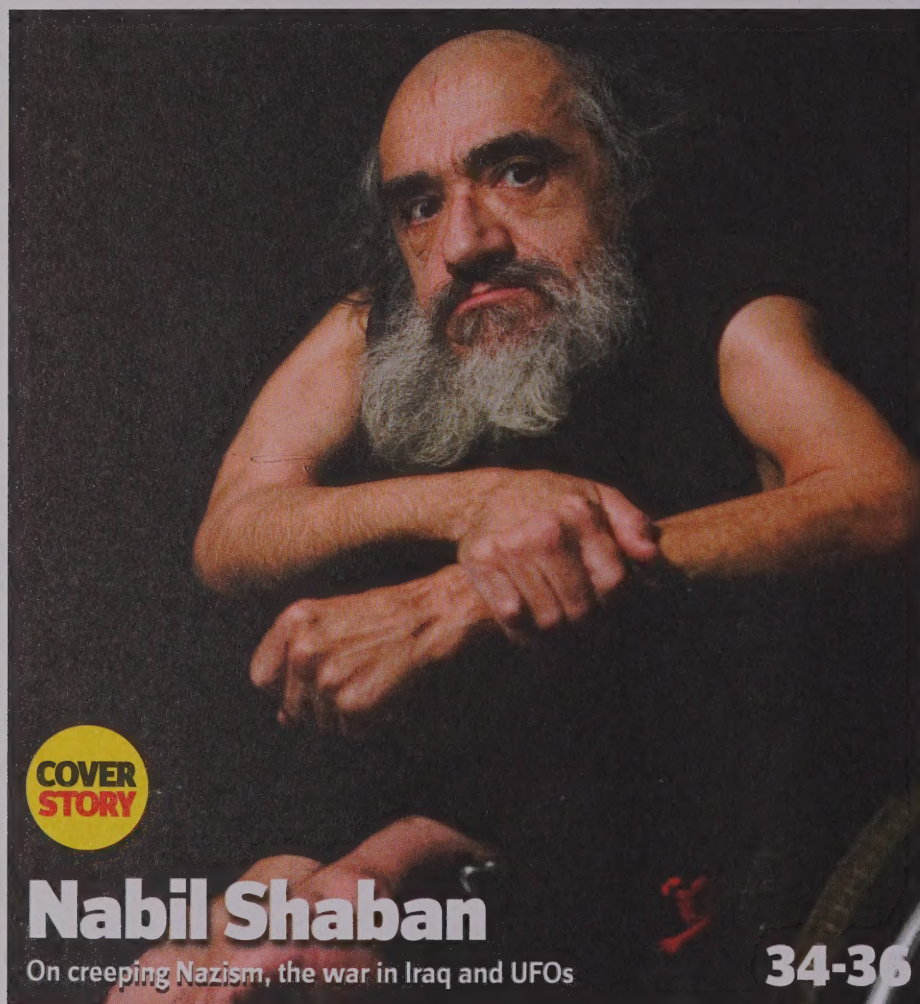
At the risk of re-stating the totally bleedin' obvious, it is society and the barriers it puts in our way that disable us, not our impairments.

In addition, the word “disabled” has added value because it defines us as a group, all disabled by society and not a disparate assortment of people with different impairments who are “differently able” and who face a variety of challenges.

We are not, and can never be, “people with disabilities” because of the inescapable reality that we're all disabled by the same discriminatory, unequal, disablist set of social barriers, attitudes and values. To call us something different is to further marginalise and ignore us.

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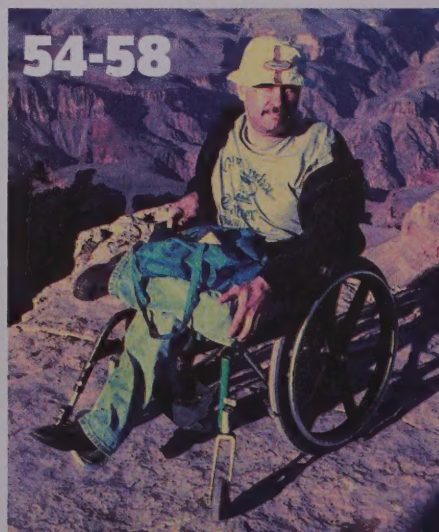
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Holding the government line

Katharine Quarmby

Mark Harper, the shadow disability minister, is tipped for bigger things, swoon some political correspondents, one of whom describes him as "fresh-faced and impressive". When I ask him whether he too will become party leader, like other Conservative disability spokesmen such as John Major and William Hague, he laughs and says that "I just want to concentrate on doing my job".

Harper struggles to put clear blue water between Conservative disability policy and that of the government. It would, indeed, be particularly hard to slide an envelope between the two parties on welfare reform – both party leaders, for instance, have identified it as a priority and their approach is eerily similar.

The finger-wagging approach of the current government towards incapacity benefit (IB) claimants, many of whom are said to be able to work and some of whom have been derided as fraudulent, will continue if the Conservatives come to power. Mark Harper



From left to right: Aidan Hargitt, Mark Harper MP, campaigner Mattie Burrells, Ginette Burrells and Tory leader David Cameron

says, in words redolent of the secretary of state for work and pensions, James Purnell: "For those disabled people who are able to work they should be given the proper opportunity to do so... a lot of disabled people would like to work." He echoes the hard-line government policy on so-called "IB fraud" – although he says "we haven't chosen to use language that would

frighten people unnecessarily" he continues: "Nothing makes tax-payers crosser than seeing able people not working," although he refuses to estimate how many "fraudsters" there are.

When asked about the lack of joined-up thinking between social care funding (which is restricted for services such as ironing and shopping which could

support disabled people to work) and the drive down on IB claimants, he is clearly sympathetic: "We are very keen on extending the use of individual budgets and giving power and control to the individual... but there are issues to be looked at in terms of funding."

He also signals no change on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the government has not yet ratified. His party has sympathy, he says, with the government's proposed opt-outs on disabled people serving on the front-line and on the retention of special schools for some disabled children. Harper maintains, stoutly, that "there remain some children whose needs are best met in a specialist setting".

Lastly, I ask him about the case of Kevin Davies, his disabled constituent who was tortured and kept in a shed until he died. Harper has worked tirelessly with Elizabeth James, Kevin's mother, to secure longer sentences for the perpetrators. "As far as Kevin's family is concerned, they are focussed... they want justice for him and for others."

breakingnews

'We cannot let this pass'

Katharine Quarmby

Three people who kicked a man with learning difficulties to death have won reductions in their minimum sentences at the Court of Appeal.

Brent Martin, 23, was set upon last August by three trained boxers who kicked, punched and stamped on him repeatedly.

One later said: "I'm not going down for a muppet."

William Hughes, 22, Marcus



Miller, 16, and Stephen Bonallie, 17, were sentenced to minimum prison terms of between 15 and 22 years.

But the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Phillips, Mr Justice

Goldring and Mr Justice Plender, sitting at the Court of Appeal last month, imposed a new minimum of 19 years for Hughes, 15 for Bonallie and 13 for Miller.

Disability campaigners are furious. Julie Newman, chair of the UK's Disabled People's Council, said: "I'm so angry about this... It's a rallying call. As disabled people, we really cannot let this pass."

Liz Sayce, chief executive of RADAR, said: "Disabled people's confidence that

hate crimes will be treated seriously is already weak; this reduction could jeopardise it even more."

Ian Macrae, *Disability Now's* editor, said:

"Mr Martin was targeted by criminals because he was disabled. Those responsible should have been given longer sentences under hate crime sentencing provision."

Robin van den Hende, of Voice UK, said that the judges' decision would shake disabled people's already limited confidence in the criminal justice system.

Couple subjected to 'horrendous' abuse win groundbreaking victory

Elizabeth Choppin

A couple with learning difficulties have been awarded £97,000 in damages from a local authority that failed to protect them from "horrendous" abuse.

The landmark high court ruling held that Hounslow Council had been negligent in not shielding the couple, not named for legal reasons, from foreseeable abuse by a gang of local youths.

In 2000, the couple, who had been in regular contact with social services, were held in their flat and assaulted in the presence of their two young children.

According to a court report,

the couple were made to perform sexual acts, had pepper spray put into their eyes, were forced to drink urine and eat faeces and were slashed with knives.

In his ruling, the judge said the council should have acted sooner to protect the couple, as it had been made aware of prior threats, assaults and infiltration of their home by the youths, who were given custodial sentences for the attack (not treated as a disability hate crime as that sentencing provision was not in force in 2000).

The case marks the first time that a local authority has been held to owe a duty

of care to adults with learning difficulties and has set a legal precedent with respect to negligence across all local authorities.

Andrew Lee, director of People First, said: "There needs to be more time to talk to people with learning difficulties as a preventative measure, to stop abuse instead of coming in after a crisis has happened."

Nicola Bailey, who leads on learning difficulties for the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), said that ADASS is pushing to give "vulnerable adults" the same protection in law as children but added that there is "always going to be an issue, or a line to walk" in fulfilling a duty of care while respecting people's

right to privacy.

Tim Hind, an LGA (Local Government Association) adult social care advisor, called it a "horrendous case" and said the LGA would inform local authorities about the circumstances of the case so that "processes could be reviewed" where necessary.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said that the DH was horrified to hear about the abuse suffered by the family in this case and is considering the implications of the ruling in the review of *No Secrets* – the guidance that underpins current adult protection.

The court has granted permission for Hounslow Council to appeal and a spokesman has confirmed this is being considered.

Less sex, less fun

Many disabled people are missing out on sex, fun and spontaneity in their lives, according to the results of an independent living "quiz".

The magazine-style quiz, carried out by Scope and supported by *Disability Now*, issued respondents with an "independent living score" ranging from 1 to 100.

Nearly a third scored between 30-49 points, which falls in the "not very independent" category.

A comparative follow-up quiz of non-disabled people showed that, by comparison, disabled people are worse off in their ability to act spontaneously, plan for the future, access information and enjoy a good lifestyle.

Disabled people were less likely to be able to try new things, with 55 per cent answering "not very often" or "rarely/never" compared to 19 per cent of non-disabled people. And 48 per cent of disabled people were rarely or never able to enjoy sexual relationships versus 17 per cent of non-disabled respondents, who were also three times as likely to feel happy and content (46 to 14 per cent).

Andy Rickell, an executive director at Scope, said: "It isn't really surprising that these results show that disabled people don't feel

happy very often and are having relatively little fun. If you don't get the support you need...then life is going to be frustrating."

The news has prompted campaigners to renew calls for the government to support the independent living bill originally proposed by Lord Ashley.

Rachel Hurst, director of Disability Awareness in Action, says the findings show that "independent living for disabled people is a lovely dream that hasn't even remotely become a reality".

Disabled protesters at a rally to promote independent living (right) were "appalled" by the findings. Chris Killick, 45, from Bermondsey, said: "A lot of disabled people will need support to go to the pub or cinema but social services don't have the resources to implement it. That means being stuck at home."

Another protester, Sue Elsgood, 41, from Greenwich, said the results showed the "indignity" that disabled people often face in their daily lives. "The fact that I can employ a PA to assist me here today makes a huge difference and I'd like that enshrined in new legislation."

• See disability rights, pages 18-19, and feature, pages 25-33



Scores of disability rights activists gathered in Whitehall last month to take part in a demonstration, organised by the Our Lives, Our Choices coalition, to highlight the postcode lottery in social care. They also urged the government to adopt the independent living bill originally proposed by Lord Ashley. A small group of the protesters then delivered a framed National Lottery ticket to 10 Downing Street for Prime Minister Gordon Brown. RADAR chief executive Liz Sayce, who took part in the protest, said it was a priority to secure disabled people a legal right to independent living.

ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

newsroundup

BB puts sight impairment on agenda

Disability groups are hoping that two visually-impaired contestants on the latest series of reality TV show *Big Brother* will help raise public awareness.

Michael Hughes (*right*), from Kilwinning, Ayrshire, is a presenter and producer on RNIB's Insight Radio and was one of 16 "housemates" who entered the show on its first night.

Lord [Colin] Low, chair of RNIB, confessed to *Disability Now* to "not being much of a student of *Big Brother*" but went on to say, "I believe that blind people should be able to do what anyone else can do. Anyone else can go into the *Big Brother* house so it's good that Michael can do that too. And he's



not representing anyone, so if he makes an ass of himself that doesn't impact on anyone else!"

RNIB spokeswoman Ciara Smyth added that Michael's presence on the show may help raise awareness of the challenges faced by blind people in everyday life, as many people "have little experience of seeing someone who is blind get on with their life and live

independently".

The show also features another visually-impaired contestant in Darnell Swallow (*below*), who has albinism.

An Albino Fellowship spokesman said: "We'll be watching Darnell's progress with interest as this is potentially an opportunity for increased public awareness of albinism."



annual disability conference in May, called on the government, the media and trade unions to tackle the social problems that have led to a spate of vicious hate crimes against disabled people.

Mr Barber said: "The police and law enforcement bodies need to understand, recognise and respond to hate crime – and attitudes in society that give rise to such violence need to be challenged head on."

Kenyan asylum-seeker wins appeal

The Court of Appeal ruled that an asylum-seeker from Kenya can pursue a Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) case against the Home Office and the company which runs Harmondsworth Detention Centre.

Peter Gitau Gichura, a wheelchair-user, was held at Harmondsworth in west London in February and August 2006.

He claims that bathroom facilities there were inaccessible and that he received inadequate medical treatment (*Disability Now*, July 2007, *News*).

The Court of Appeal ruling establishes that the DDA did offer protection to disabled people in prisons and detention centres before December

DDA challenge for post office closures

The government and Royal Mail are set to be challenged in court over the legality of the programme of 2,500 post office closures.

This month, the High Court in London granted a disabled couple, Jonathan Coe, 60, and Judy Brown, 61, from Hastings, Sussex, a judicial review into whether the closures were unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

The couple say that the government acted unlawfully in 2006 by removing Royal Mail from the list of public bodies subject to the DDA's disability equality duty, which would require carrying out disability impact assessments.

A Department for Work and Pensions spokeswoman said: "We believe we have applied the law correctly and will continue to defend our decision."

A Royal Mail spokesman said that a comment on the

issues behind the High Court ruling would be "impossible at this early stage".

The final hearing is expected to take place in October.

Hate crime branded UK scandal by TUC

TUC boss Brendan Barber branded disablist hate crime "a scandal that shames modern Britain".

Mr Barber, general secretary of the TUC (Trades Union Congress), at its

2006 and the introduction of the disability equality duty (DED).

Mr Gichura fled Kenya after he allegedly received death threats from government officials.

He has had several asylum applications rejected since his arrival in the UK in June 2001.

Chinese agree to rewrite Games guide

Organisers of the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games were forced to rewrite a "disablist" official guide for volunteers.

The guide had tips on how volunteers should interact with disabled people, who were described as a "special group" with "unique personalities and ways of thinking". It also said: "Disabled people can be defensive and have a strong sense of inferiority."

A UK Disabled People's Council spokeswoman said the use of such language in an official Olympic guide was "outrageous", adding: "This guide makes it clear that China has an absolutely outdated, disablist attitude toward disabled people."

A British Paralympic Association spokeswoman said the language used in the guide was "certainly not ideal" but showed "progress" towards better attitudes to disabled people in China.

eBay auction claims detract from report

MPs were told during a Commons investigation into the blue badge scheme that disabled parking badges were being sold on eBay for up to £5,000, three newspapers reported last month.

But a transport select committee spokeswoman said: "There is nothing in the report about selling badges on eBay," and nothing could be found by *Disability Now* after conducting its own trawl of oral and written evidence.

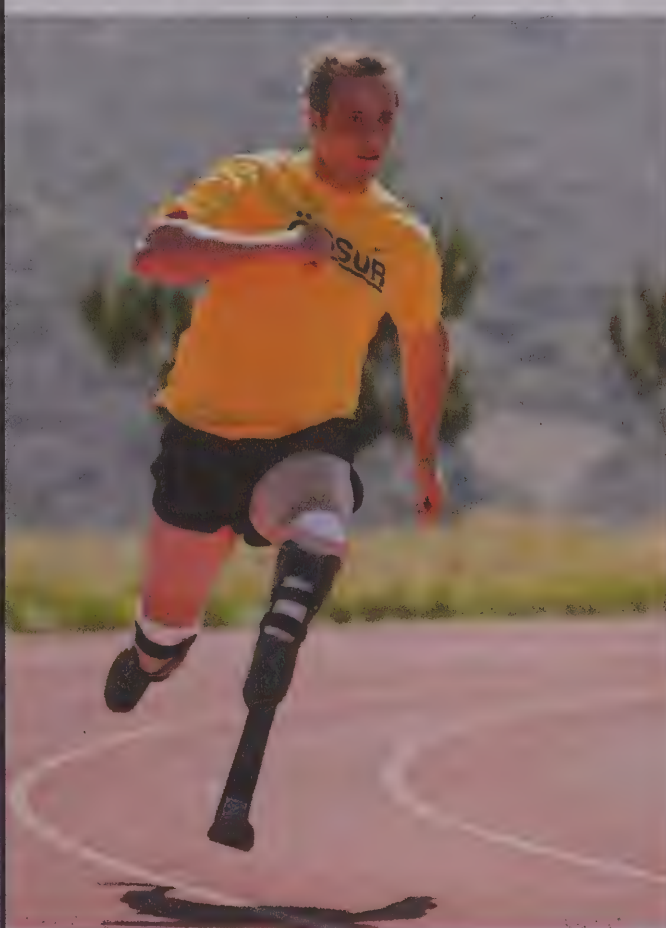
The newspapers implied that the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) had given evidence that disabled people, or their relatives, were putting blue badges up for auction – a claim denied by DPTAC.

The row arguably took attention from other parts of the report, including its finding of wide differences in how disabled people are assessed by local authorities and a call for a nationwide database of badge-holders.

It also recommended a probe into whether carpark operators who fail to fine abusers are contravening the DDA.

Louise Ellman MP, the committee's chair, said there was a "postcode lottery". "There must be greater consistency in the

Oscar's court win



Athlete Oscar Pistorius won his appeal against a decision to ban him from competing in the Olympic Games. Pistorius, a South African double-leg

amputee who uses carbon fibre blades to run, will now be eligible to compete for a place alongside non-disabled athletes in the Olympics.

way in which the eligibility criteria for blue badges are applied across the country, and those who use stolen badges must face the consequences," she said.

Helen Smith, director of policy and campaigns at Mobilise, said: "I am very

pleased to hear that MPs have finally realised the blue badge scheme needs a massive overhaul."

She added: "We are glad that supermarkets who fail to police their bays will be investigated to see if they're in breach of the DDA."

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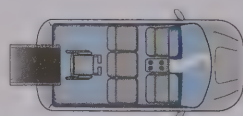
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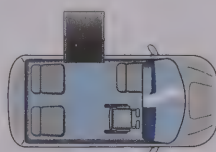
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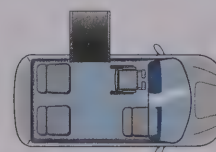


■ Rear Wheelchair Access



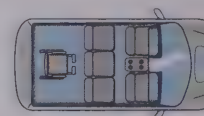
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STEPHEN STRATHDEE

Air laws welcome despite flaws

New air travel laws should improve access for passengers, says **Sunil Peck**

Disability rights campaigners are hailing new European Union legislation as a significant step towards equality for disabled air passengers.

The legislation comes into force on 26 July and covers assisted travel, compensation for damaged mobility equipment and disability equality training for airport and airline staff.

The legislation gives disabled people the right to expect assistance from arrival at an airport to an aircraft, and then from the aircraft to departure from the airport, including both getting on and getting off the plane.

The new laws apply to disabled passengers who use commercial flights which arrive or depart from European Union countries.

Although passengers will be entitled to compensation if a wheelchair or piece of specialist equipment is damaged during a flight or by airport ground staff, the Equality and Human Rights Commission urges people to insure equipment because compensation for any damage will be low.

Maria Nyman, policy officer at the European Disability Forum, welcomes the requirement for all staff who work with the public to undergo disability equality training because most of the complaints the EDF receives stem from negative attitudes towards disabled people.

The Civil Aviation Authority will enforce the legislation in the UK.

Jimi Adeleye, secretary of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory

Committee, says that having one body in charge will give passengers more chance of redress if they are discriminated against because it will be harder for airlines and airport authorities to dodge their responsibilities by blaming each other.

The first stage of the legislation came into effect in July 2007 and made it unlawful for airlines to refuse bookings from disabled passengers or to bar them from boarding an aircraft. But it also introduced a grey area by giving a captain the right to prevent disabled passengers boarding on safety grounds.

Mr Adeleye says there have been few cases reported officially since the new laws came into force 12 months ago, although this could indicate that people do not know how to file a formal complaint.

Only last month, wheelchair-user Greg Cronin, from Wakefield, who does not communicate verbally but has flown unaccompanied with Ryanair several times, was prevented from boarding a Ryanair flight by the captain, who decided it was unsafe for him to fly as he was unaccompanied and would be unable to communicate with the crew in an emergency.

Maria Nyman would like to see a clearer definition of the safety grounds governing a captain's right to bar disabled passengers. Nevertheless, she views the EU legislation as good news for disabled air passengers.

"This is still very good legislation," she says. "It could be the starting point for the end of discrimination against disabled air passengers. Disability groups have a very clear role to play to make sure that this regulation will make a change. We have a very powerful tool."

→ Contact us

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politics

Milestones on a long road



Following a speech in the House of Lords in a debate on disability rights, disabled crossbench peer **Lord Low of Dalston** (left) reflects on one legislative milestone

Lord [Alf] Morris's Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, which was enacted in 1970, did two things. It was important symbolically because it constituted a recognition of disabled people as a constituency who merited public attention and of provision for them as an area of public policy that needed to be developed.

Disabled people were getting quite restive in the 60s – that was when DIG (the Disablement Income Group) was founded, campaigning strongly for

It was important symbolically because it constituted a recognition of disabled people

better benefits – and Alf's act was widely seen as a response from society to this mounting clamour for attention. But it wasn't actually providing what disabled people were clamouring for at the time,



Lord Morris: his act was about duties, not rights

which was better financial support.

Alf's act was mainly about local authority provision, giving powers to local authorities to provide more in the way of services. But it wasn't about rights. It laid duties on local authorities to provide services, though, as we saw over time, these duties were somewhat porous and subsequent legislation had to be enacted to tighten up the duties. This was an act about duties to provide services and rights didn't really enter into it, though, of course, duties implied rights.

One of the big things that's

coming up now in the continuing discussion on disability rights is that local authorities are actually only meeting the needs of those people with the highest levels of support. Getting on for four-fifths of local authorities are only meeting the requirements of those whose needs are classified either as critical or substantial.

The emphasis on rights only began, not at the beginning of the 70s, but at

the end of the 70s, when they set up the Committee on Restrictions Against Disabled People which, in 1981, came up with recommendations for anti-discrimination legislation. And that fired the starting gun for disabled people to get rights in legislation – which reached its first milestone in 1995 with the Disability Discrimination Act.

There's always a big time lag between a need being demonstrated and persuading the politicians to take action. It took 13 or 14 years in the case of anti-discrimination legislation and, I think, nine or ten bills, all abortive attempts in Parliament. So Alf started with services, and the spotlight shifted to rights beginning in the early 80s with the first milestone being reached in 1995. There's a continuing campaign to expand the scope of anti-discrimination legislation and that campaign goes on.

• **Lord Low was talking to Ian Macrae**

→ Have your say

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mediawatch



BB's scary reality

Ian Macrae

Knowing that "Big Brother is watching you" must be a surreal enough experience in itself; knowing that up to four million people are also watching and waiting for you to make a complete prat of yourself takes a certain kind of ego-fuelled courage. But being in the *Big Brother* house as a representative of a whole community, well, that's just

weird beyond imagining.

Let's face it, who'd be Mikey Hughes? Whatever happens, he's unlikely to win, even if he's the last man standing at the end of the current series of the Channel 4 reality show. In that event, people will say, "He obviously benefited massively from a sympathy vote." Or he'll have been voted off by people wanting to put an end to his misery.

Mikey's clearly something

of an individual. He likes wearing lurid ponchos and women's underwear. He's not shy about joining in, dancing, arguing or unashamedly finding his way round with a cane. This makes him either a completely untypical blind person or someone always set apart and defined by his cane. The one thing he can't be and should never be judged as is a representative. But doubtless he will be.

If responsibility weighs heavily on Mikey's shoulders,

what about the other disabled housemate, Darnell Swallow? How many dogs has he got on his back? His being black is less rare than it once would have been. Mikey's presence takes some of the focus off his own visual impairment. But he also has albinism. This makes him part of a sub-community, at the mercy of a complex *mélange* of cultural and identity issues as well as the fear of the different, which is familiar to other people with albinism. Talk about a crowded house!

Breaking into news

In real, rather than reality, TV it's an old, old story: when did you last see a disabled person on a news bulletin?

Next question: when did you last see a disabled person on the news talking about something other than their disabled status? Where is the blind banker giving an expert perspective on the credit crunch or the wheel-

chair-user giving a view on the desirability or otherwise of organic produce?

The Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN), part of the Employers' Forum on Disability, has launched an initiative which aims to open journalists' minds.

Clare Morrow, network manager with BCIDN, told

Disability Now: "I thought we could assist journalists by pulling together details of people who happen to have a disability but are experts in something else.

"The plan is to produce an information resource that broadcast media journalists can tap into, offering disabled experts and more. We'd also point them in the direction of people who are happy to be case studies."

Asked to give an example

of how such a database might work, Morrow said: "One of the things I've been talking to the BBC and Sky about is how they do newspaper reviews. Often they use journalists from other papers but it's an area where you could use vocal disabled people who have contributions to make."

• If you're interested in being part of the database, email clare.morrow@employers-forum.co.uk

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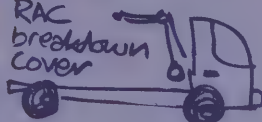
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disabilityrights

Charging: a beginner's guide to beating the system



The complex system of charging for care creates many barriers for disabled people, says **Laurence Clark**. In his beginner's guide to charges, he explains how disabled people are being fleeced by the state

Where did charging come from?

Attendance allowance (AA) was originally introduced to pay for the many additional costs of disability – but not care! When the Conservative government introduced disability living allowance (DLA) in 1992, they cunningly rebranded AA as the DLA “care component”, paving the way for it to be taken back by the state through care charging. When New Labour came along, instead of abolishing this unfair tax on disability, they instead legitimised it with complex, separate guidance for England and Scotland.

So do charges vary according to where you live?

Most definitely! As the government merely introduced guidance

instead of legislation, councils can basically charge whatever they like! For example, if you're an independent living fund (ILF) recipient, some councils won't make you pay their charges on top of the ILF charges, but others will. The differences are even more extreme between England and Scotland.

But didn't the government say charges shouldn't be a disincentive to work?

They did, but the reality is somewhat different. The guidance for England says that disabled people receiving income support or incapacity benefit should be exempt from charges. But as both of these benefits are related to employment, effectively

disabled people can avoid charging by giving up work and qualifying for these benefits. In Scotland, charging is even more of a disincentive since earned income is still taken into account when charges are calculated. So far none of the government's famous back-to-work schemes have taken these issues into account.

Hang on a minute – isn't Scotland meant to have free personal care?

Only if you're over 65! Even

then, various local authorities interpret this differently, for instance, by only paying for two free baths a week!

Doesn't Gordon Brown encourage everyone to save for later life?

Disabled people with savings of more than £6,000 (in Scotland), £12,750 (in England) or £11,500 (for the ILF) pay



Pig ignorant: government policies mean there's no point saving

an extra £1 a week for every £250 they have above these limits. Savings over £18,500 disqualify disabled people from the ILF and savings over £21,000 in England may result in them paying the full cost of their support. So forget saving for that new electric wheelchair, home adaptation or your child's university fees – as your hard-earned money will only get taken off you! Disabled students have even had their student loans regarded as capital

and faced increased charges as a consequence!

So should I put my money into bricks and mortar or the stock market?

If you've got your heart set on becoming a property tycoon or buying a Spanish villa then forget it, as you can be legally forced to sell your second home and put the proceeds towards your support. Similarly, stocks and shares are also counted as capital when charges are worked out.

So if I want to plan for my future then should I pay into a pension?

A loophole in the current legislation means that income from private or occupational pensions is not disregarded when charges are calculated. So there's no point getting a pension as you won't receive any benefit once you retire!

Where does this leave us?

Charging is a barrier to all of the opportunities to improve our standard of living that others take

for granted, such as higher education, employment, savings, property, pensions and the choice of where to live. It is little wonder so many of us are unemployed when many of the tangible benefits of working are denied to us!

So my advice for avoiding getting fleeced by the state is to spend, spend, spend... because otherwise they'll find some way to take it off you!

• See feature, pages 25-33



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worldview



NATIONAL CENTRE FOR PROMOTION OF EMPLOYMENT FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

India's long road to equality

There are at least 70 million disabled people in India, many living in poverty. But **Javed Abidi** says the country is making great strides towards equality

In spite of being from an average, middle-class family in India, I was lucky to win a scholarship which enabled me to go to the US in 1985. Four years and one life-threatening surgery later, when I decided to return to my country, a lot of people, including my friends and family, thought I was mad! They had genuine fears that life as a wheelchair-user would be difficult in India. Finally, the Gemini in me prevailed and I returned and settled here in Delhi in 1989.

Their fears almost proved

correct when for six months, I remained jobless. I had graduated summa cum laude in communications, with a specialisation in print journalism, but employers refused to look at my above 90 per cent credentials; instead, they would only stare at my wheelchair! They patted me on my back. Told me how brave I was, how courageous, how intelligent...

But I didn't give up. I started freelancing. I began with small city magazines and worked my way up. Within six months, I was

writing for mainstream national publications. I interviewed politicians, actors, industrialists, ministers and even the then Prime Minister. I was able to prove, to myself I guess more than anybody else,

They had genuine fears that life as a wheelchair-user would be difficult in India

that a wheelchair-user could be a damn good journalist.

In the process, however, I was a bit heartbroken.

I realised how tough it was to be a disabled person in India. From education, to employment, to access, it was all very, very gloomy.

After Rajiv Gandhi's sudden and tragic death in 1991, his widow Sonia Gandhi established the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF). Disability was one of RGF's five core areas and I was chosen to establish and head that unit. We started work in May, 1992. The next four years were astonishing. By 1993, we established the need for a law to protect the rights of disabled people. By 1994, we were able to get it drafted. By 1995, the Disability Act was passed, unopposed, by both Houses of Parliament!

But laws exist only on paper. Implementation has been a rough journey. From persuasion to advocacy to activism; sit-ins, rallies, court cases and yes, detention at various police stations – what a journey it has been. Politicians forgot all about us and the law they had drafted and passed. No wonder; India has so many laws! We couldn't have achieved a quarter of our success had it not been for the unstinted support of the media. The judiciary also played a huge role.

Things are very different today than in 1989. Being a journalist, I guess, is no

longer a big deal! Disabled people are aspiring to be lawyers and doctors. The glass ceiling has been broken and some are now getting into India's premier Civil Service. In 1989, there was not a single ramp in the city of Delhi. Now, there are a few hundred. The Delhi Metro is not just world-class but entirely accessible. The new buses on Delhi's roads are low-floor and disabled-friendly. The concept of inclusive education has been firmly established. Regular schools, colleges and universities are admitting disabled people and the Confederation of Indian Industries has unveiled a corporate code on disability. Things are looking good and I for one, as a disabled Indian, feel mighty pleased.

Let's not forget that India's population is a billion plus. Even conservative estimates suggest 70 million or more are disabled people. Four-fifths of the population are rural based and many of them are still very poor. And there is a direct link between poverty and disability.

There is still a long, long road ahead.

• **Javed Abidi is honorary director of the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People in India and secretary of the Commonwealth Disabled Peoples' Forum**

US bank bills not accessible, says court

The US government discriminates against blind people by making it impossible for them to tell the difference between bank notes of different value, a court has ruled.

The appeals court in Washington, DC, upheld a decision by another court on a case originally brought by the American Council of the Blind.

The government had argued that blind people adapt by folding corners of the notes or asking store assistants to help them.

But the court said the US government might as well argue that, as some disabled people can crawl on all fours, there is no need to make buildings wheelchair-accessible.

The decision should now mean the government will have to introduce new notes of different sizes or featuring tactile markings.

EU report calls for discrimination action

The European Union (EU) has moved a step closer towards passing laws that would tackle discrimination against disabled people.

Members of the European Parliament adopted a report by Liberal Democrat MEP Liz Lynne, calling for legislation to tackle discrimination on



WADE SPEES/POST AND COURIER

Leading US rights campaigner dies

The lawyer, author and passionate disability rights campaigner Harriet McBryde Johnson has died at her home in the US.

Johnson, who was profiled in last month's *Disability Now* and was famed for publicly taking on the bio-ethicist Peter Singer, died

last month at her home in Charleston, South Carolina.

In her interview, she told us: "I'm not much of a future planner. I do what I do and see what happens. I will probably die with my boots on, as they say. I like my work and I need to work to pay for my life."

the grounds of disability, age, religion, beliefs and sexual orientation.

The European Commission was set to announce which anti-discrimination measures it would propose as part of a package of social measures, as *Disability Now* went to press.

The European Disability Forum, which has collected nearly 1.4 million signatures on a petition calling for anti-disability discrimination laws, welcomed the Parliament's move and said it was "a positive step", but emphasised the need for legislation specifically on disability.

Vietnam ramps up access on buses

A bus company in Vietnam's largest city has launched 10 buses equipped with wheelchair ramps, as part of a government-backed pilot project.

The buses will run on two routes in Ho Chi Minh City. Staff have already received disability awareness training.

The company is also developing a piece of equipment that it hopes will allow visually-impaired people to communicate with the driver of an approaching bus.

onetowatch



Kiruna pans panto

When Australian actor, dancer and theatre director Kiruna Stamell played a teacher in Walford Primary School, she became *Eastenders*' first character of restricted growth. She has worked in Europe, Australia and Singapore and co-founded Atypical Theatre Company. Familiar to Baz Luhrmann fans as La Petite Princess in *Moulin Rouge*, Kiruna tells us how her David Lynch obsession left her tongue-tied.

What's the best thing about being disabled?

I find it easier to network because people remember what I look like.

How do you deal with people who barf on about your impairment? Have you any good putdowns?

If some random is asking intrusive questions I'll tell them that if they can find another random ordinary looking stranger to join our conversation who's also willing to answer these questions, then I will too...

What's the funniest thing anyone's ever said to you about your impairment?

Well, I'm not sure but one lady once said: "Ooooooh, you're so pretty and you look just like Charlotte Church: I bet you wish you had her body, don't you?"

What makes you angry?

When total strangers ask me exactly how tall I am... when clearly they can see my height. I don't get why giving them an exact number makes the world better for them.

What's the one thing that could be invented to make your life as a disabled person better?

A kinetic energy device that could move things from a distance, like open heavy doors, use ATM machines and press lift buttons that are too high.

What do you most like about being a performer?

Learning something new on each project. I love the research and development of ideas, characters and worlds.

And what do you not like about it?

People assuming I do panto.

Who's your favourite disabled person ever?

[The actor] Peter Dinklage.

Do you have any special or hidden talent apart from acting and dancing?

I can tie jelly snakes in a knot with my tongue; also cherry stems. Watched too much David Lynch, which is why I bothered to practice this skill.

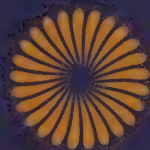
If you didn't have your impairment, which other one would you like to have?

Couldn't say: I like mine because I'm familiar with it.

→ Who do you think is One to Watch?

Send us your nominations for likely lads and lasses who could answer our 10 questions. They can be rising stars in any field of entertainment, business, the media or beyond

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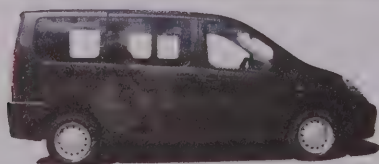
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Disabled people are finding it harder and harder to secure the support they need to live independent lives. Most campaigners believe the system is in crisis. **John Pring** investigates



IMAGE: CAREIMAGES.COM

Fighting for a **life**

Three-quarters of local authorities restricting social care support to those judged to have “critical” or “substantial” needs. A young disabled woman who has to pay more in charges than she can keep for herself from her wages. Older people humiliated by exhausting assessments of their ability to pay charges for their care. Other disabled people forced to cut back on food, visiting friends, heating and even buying Christmas presents because of the charges they are forced to pay. Some forced to the point of suicide

because of threatened charges and the lack of support. Others having to pass up new work opportunities because they fear losing their meagre package of support if they move to a different local authority area.

There is broad agreement across the disability movement that the entire

We want the government to recognise the dire effect on people's lives that the current system of funding and charging is having

social care system is in crisis, and that the picture is looking worse by the day.

Sue Bott, director of the National Centre for Independent Living, says her organisation hears horrendous stories every day from disabled people struggling to live independently. “It’s absolutely crap out there,” she says. “People are having to live the most awful lives. We want the government to recognise the dire effect on people’s lives that the current system of funding and charging is having.”

As Baroness [Jane] Campbell said in a speech at St John’s College, →

INDEPENDENCE DAZE

DAVINA

Davina*, who needs 24-hour support, applied in March 2005 to Ealing council for an increase in the money she received as direct payments, as it wasn't enough to attract and retain good PAs.

But the council did not increase her payments until May 2006. It also failed to communicate with her properly or acknowledge that she could have received all of her support via direct payments.

Davina says the council's actions left her feeling suicidal, and took her case to the Local Government Ombudsman, which found in her favour and said the extra money would have made a significant difference to her quality of life.

The council agreed to pay Davina £16,700 compensation.

*Not her real name

JAMES ROSE

James Rose has been on direct payments for three years. PAs help him with everyday tasks.

But since returning from university in Cornwall to Hampshire last autumn, even though his needs have not changed, he has had new assessments by both Hampshire County Council and the Independent Living Fund. He has also had to argue with Hampshire that he still needs 24-hour support, while the council at one stage told him social activities should not be included in his package.

James wanted to return to Cornwall to set up a PA agency for disabled people, but partly due to fears of yet another gruelling assessment, he has decided against the move.

He is still in dispute with Hampshire about his package

Cambridge, in April: "Whilst our politicians have adopted the language of the independent living movement, users receiving services are lucky to get anything extending beyond being washed and fed."

James Elder-Woodward, chair of Scope's Independent Living Zone think-tank, says the situation is much the same in Scotland. "So-called 'free care' is really only available to a few old people, mainly living in residential care. The vast majority of others, including all disabled people, are being charged through the nose for social care."

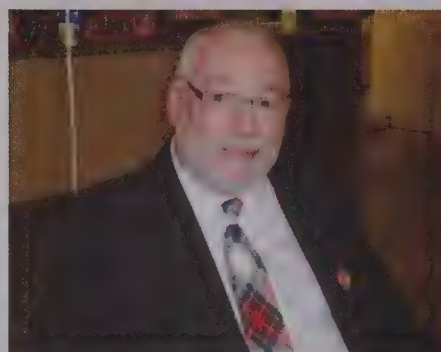
And Scotland is actually more "backward" than England in its provision of direct payments to disabled people, he adds.

The problems with the system of social care support for disabled people are many and varied. Key among them is, of course, the lack of funding and the charges many are forced to pay, depending on where they live.

Claire Glasman, of the disabled women's group WinVisible, says many disabled people assessed as needing services in Camden, north London, have stopped receiving them because of unfair charges. "A lot of people have dropped out because they do not want the means test or are worried about how much they will be charged," she says.

A report published last month* by the Coalition on Charging - whose members represent disabled people, carers and older people - found in a "snapshot" survey that 80 per cent of people who stopped using care services say charges played a part in that decision.

Elder-Woodward says: "Local authorities have never funded social care properly, let alone direct payments." He believes social care should be free at the point of delivery, and paid for by national social care insurance.



From top, James Elder-Woodward, Baroness Campbell, and campaigners who delivered a banner featuring disabled people's experiences of independent living to 10 Downing Street last June

ABI HARDWICK

THOMAS METZLER/SCOPE

Baroness Campbell, meanwhile, says social care should be “a national priority”, with sharply increased investment, potentially “top slicing from the NHS budget”.

She also believes that too much money is swallowed up by the bureaucracy, ironically the same bureaucracy that is used to restrict access to services.

Douglas Joy, a senior solicitor in the Disability Law Service’s social welfare team, has seen an increasing number of disabled people take legal action around independent living issues over the last five years.

“There has always been a resources problem, but it is getting tighter because local authorities are changing their eligibility criteria,” he says. “They are moving the goalposts.”

Anne Pridmore, former chair of the United Kingdom’s Disabled People’s Council and now chair of Scope’s

The freedom of movement of disabled and older people is entirely dependent on whether or not a local authority social services will agree to take over your support

engagement and influence committee, goes further. “I have grave doubts about individual budgets,” she says. “I have a horrible feeling that it is a cost-cutting measure.”

Another key difficulty is that packages of support are attached as if with glue to a person’s home area. If a disabled person wants to move to a different part of the country, they face yet more gruelling “assessments” and the risk of being given a less generous package.

In May, Baroness Campbell tabled an

amendment to the government’s health and social care bill. “The freedom of movement of disabled and older people is entirely dependent on whether or not a local authority social services will agree to take over your support,” she told the Lords, and said the flaw was causing “serious human rights violations”.

She says disabled people also need “a high degree of control” over how and when support is provided. And that requires an infrastructure of third sector and grassroots organisations providing advice, information and advocacy.

Pridmore agrees. “It can be daunting for people who have never had to manage their own budgets, some of whom find themselves employers when never having been employed themselves.” That support, she says, should be provided by organisations of disabled people.

Replacing PAs can be particularly tough, she says. “Once you are through the six-month period it is virtually impossible to get rid of people. As an employer of personal assistants you feel on a roller-coaster between dependency and empowerment and it becomes a balancing act.

“When the relationship breaks down for whatever reason, you need to have independent support to carry out disciplinary procedures. There needs to be a change in employment law which recognises the unique relationship whereby the employer is also the recipient of the service.”

Some service-providers have their concerns, too. One is around the risk of allowing unregulated and unregistered self-employed PAs into the homes of “vulnerable” disabled people.

Colin Angel, head of policy and communications at the United Kingdom Homecare Association, says: “It really does worry me. There are considerable

INDEPENDENCE DAZE

JJ* was pressured to pay charges she couldn’t afford for the homecare she receives from Camden social services.

The council introduced a new means-testing policy for all older and disabled users of homecare last year.

JJ, who comes from an Afro-Caribbean background, receives two hours of support a day as well as help with food shopping, which she pays for with direct payments.

She had written to Camden several times to ask for a review of her charges, because she said they had overcalculated her income and undercounted her expenses.

With backing from WinVisible, she lodged an official complaint. In March, the council agreed that her support would remain free.

JJ said: “For six months, the stress I was under rose so high that I was in great pain from my condition all the time. They say they are helping you, they say they are committed to diversity. They say one thing – then do the other.”

*Not her real name

• To find out more about the campaign against charging, email winvisible@allwomenscount.net or tel: 020 7482 2496 (voice and minicom), or email Camden’s Campaign Against Care Charges at cacc@googlemail.com or tel: 07528 841 614

concerns from the majority of providers. It is genuine concern for the people who use services.”

But NCIL’s Sue Bott says that, just because someone is disabled, doesn’t mean they are necessarily vulnerable. “You start by listening to the person →

INDEPENDENCE DAZE

BARBARA

When Barbara*, who is disabled and receives direct payments, was caring for her terminally ill husband, she had to be admitted to a hospital 100 miles from home.

She informed Norfolk social services and arranged a live-in care worker for her husband. Two days before she was due to be admitted to hospital, social services cancelled her arrangements as they were too expensive, and said her husband would have to be admitted to a care home, leaving her no time to inspect it.

Barbara had to "dash round and get friends and relatives to step into the breach".

Instead of the planned six weeks rehabilitation in hospital, she came home after eight days and became her husband's main carer again.

In 2005, the council suddenly started to charge for the care her husband received and sent the couple a bill for £3,000 arrears, and refused to reassess them.

When Barbara refused to pay, the bill kept rising until it hit £8,000. She was so angry she was ready to go to prison.

Eventually, court orders to pay the arrears were cancelled and Barbara was told the original assessment had been wrong and she was actually owed £194. Barbara says the council's behaviour was "appalling", "high-handed" and "uncaring".

Norfolk was one of the original pilot areas for direct payments and at first was "brilliant", she says but since then support has been "whittled back and whittled back and whittled back".

* Not her real name



Cold comfort: activists say disabled people are finding it increasingly difficult to secure the support they need to live independently

who is using the services and you make absolutely sure that the right level of support is there. It is not acceptable for a local authority – and I know they do this – to give people a direct payment and say, 'Now you are out of sight, out of mind.'

When that happens and abuse is alleged, she says, staff often "charge in like the cavalry" and the service-user ends up in residential care. Good safeguarding policies have to be balanced and informed by the voices of disabled people, she says.

So what is the government doing to

allay these concerns?

In March, it launched its independent living strategy, which talked about personalisation, choice and control and acknowledged "a gap between national policy and people's real experiences". The strategy received a generally warm welcome, but was described by RADAR as "largely a summary of existing initiatives" with "no sign of the radical reform programme disabled people want". It was also criticised for not including an immediate commitment to new legislation. As RADAR says: "Waving a strategy at a care manager →

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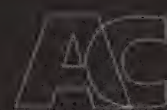
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Care services minister Ivan Lewis (left) and work and pensions minister James Purnell talk to Rowen Jade, acting chair of Equality 2025, last month at a consultation event on the government's independent living strategy

OFFICE FOR DISABILITY ISSUES

who wants to cut your package is not going to cut it."

However, the strategy does include a pledge to conduct a disability equality impact assessment of council charging policies and the government's own recent incapacity benefit reforms.

And in May, the government launched a six-month consultation on the future shape of the social care system and how it should be funded.

There is also much activity among

campaigners and activists.

There is the independent living bill, first put forward by Lord Ashley in 2006, which was due to receive its second reading in the Commons as *Disability Now* went to press.

And many campaigners hope disabled people will increasingly use the Human Rights Act to secure a right to independent living, and the disability equality duty in the Disability Discrimination Act, which has already been used in two London boroughs to

fend off council plans to restrict funding and access to support.

There is also the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which, if ratified by the UK government, could give disabled people a further tool to secure independent living as a human right.

One of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's priorities this year is to influence the government on the future of social care provision. ➔

INDEPENDENCE DAZE

DAVID

David* receives a package of 46 hours support a week from his London borough council, and has been on direct payments for about seven years.

He says direct payments have been "a step forward" and "beneficial" in helping him live a more independent life.

He has had no problems with the size of his support package, although he has heard that people who need 24/7 support have had to fight for the package they need.

He says direct payments have allowed him to choose who he wants to support him and when he wants them to work.

But David, who works for the disability charity Scope, feels there should be more assistance to help with recruitment, contracts and paperwork, managing staff and training. The council organises daytime meetings of direct payments-users but they clash with his work commitments.

He also thinks the assistance should be more proactive. "It feels as though you are given everything but then you are left out in the cold," he says.

*Not his real name.

And last month, the Our Lives, Our Choices coalition of disabled and older people and carers – which includes NCIL, RADAR, Scope and Mind – held a lobby of Parliament to call for, among other things, the introduction of the independent living bill, a statutory right to independent living and urgent action on the social care crisis (see picture, page 33).

Meanwhile, the Coalition on Charging has called for a thorough review of the impact of charging and a reassessment of the contribution care services can make to achieving national government goals such as inclusion, equality and reducing poverty, and for the government to bring forward the equality impact assessments of charging policies.

Chris Brace, director of campaigns

for RADAR, says the government must start looking at spending on social care support as an investment, and a means of “enabling people to live their lives and achieve what they want to achieve” and “live safely and independently in their own homes”.

People may not be out on the streets, but MPs are getting to know these things through their constituency postbags

But he adds: “I really think there needs to be a recognition that more funding is needed to achieve full rights to independent living. You have got to pay for it.”

Bott is optimistic that the

government can be persuaded. “People may not be out on the streets, but MPs are getting to know these things through their constituency postbags. There is every reason to think that in the end the government can be persuaded to see things our way. I think there is everything to fight for.” ■

*Charging into Poverty? Copies from www.ncil.org.uk

**No-one from the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services was available to comment on this feature

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THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE:

A Department of Health spokeswoman said: "We have already set about reforming the social care system by giving more money and more personal control – an extra £520m to support councils to radically transform services whilst giving the vast majority of people who receive funded care their own personal budgets so they can choose the support services they want for themselves or a family member.

"We appreciate the need for radical reform, which is why last month Government launched a debate about how we can fund care and support in a way that is affordable and fair in the future."



ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

Sue Elsgood, from Greenwich, at the Our Lives, Our Choices rally



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Playing apart

In the 1980s and 90s, actor, playwright and filmmaker Nabil Shaban was in demand in film, TV and theatre. He played characters ranging from Hamlet, to a romantic lead, and a *Dr Who* baddie. Ten years on, the offers and commissions have dried up. In an outspoken interview with **Kelly Mullan**, he claims that creeping Nazi attitudes to disability are squeezing disabled people out of mainstream entertainment

There are moves within the medical profession and within genetic engineering sciences for a eugenics solution. They still regard us as inferior, or as life unworthy of life, therefore they find a play like this very uncomfortable. It's a truth they don't want to face up to, 'cause no one wants to admit that at heart they're still Nazis."

Born in Amman, Jordan, in 1953, Shaban moved to Britain aged three for treatment for osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle-bone disease). He spent the next six years in hospital and says he owes his creativity, antipathy for authority and intolerance for injustice to his childhood experience of disability.

"We have an individual responsibility to try to stop injustice. Disabled people are constantly exposed to injustice. If people become disabled as teenagers or adults they experience a different world. As a disabled child you learn quickly that people in authority can't be trusted (they're invariably wrong, they make mistakes) much earlier than non-disabled people, as your life is constantly being ruined by people in authority: doctors, teachers and social workers. Disability lends itself to a rebellious nature."

Shaban links the decreasing visibility of disabled people in the media to censorship in the form of the commercialisation of entertainment, and connects the lack of opportunities for issue-based drama to the arts funding policies of a government unwilling to be challenged.

"The British government broke international law by invading and occupying Iraq. When you have a criminal government you don't want people to have a voice to question it, so the government puts pressure on the arts councils to penalise any arts organisation liable to protest about government policy."

Shaban put his money where his mouth was, when he went to No 10 in 2003 and handed back nearly £25,000 in government funding: "The contract said, 'neither party can bring the other party into disrepute.' By invading Iraq they immediately brought my

“There's still an inherent prejudice towards us, and a desire to see us removed from the face of the earth”

company into disrepute. I thought others might follow my example, give back funding, refuse to co-operate."

A seemingly likely candidate to back a boycott of the Beijing Olympics, he says: "It would be hypocritical for Paralympians to boycott Beijing. Who's going to boycott the British Olympics? I was asked by Seb Coe and Jude Kelly to be on a committee to help bring the Olympics to London; I said no way. Tibet and Iraq, there's no difference."

Shaban's advice to disabled artists is "get a camera and get your work online", as the mainstream media pull up their wheelchair ramps. "In the 1980s, disabled people started to infiltrate TV and theatre and even cinema. Then, in the mid-1990s, the powers that be decided: 'Oooops. That's not a good idea. We actually want to wipe out disabled people so we don't want them in the public domain.' So you see the BBC disability programmes unit and Link at ITV suddenly disappeared. Programmes like *Same Difference*, *One in Four*, they'd all disappeared by the end of the 90s. There was nothing put in its place. The BBC didn't honour its claim that it would put more disabled people in mainstream programmes. Where are they?"

Shaban has repeatedly stuck his wheel in the door of the arts establishment, to ➔

MARC MARNIE STAGEFRIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

Driven, dogmatic, dogged and droll, Nabil Shaban is on a mission to make disability visible.

Shaban's current play, *The First To Go*, dramatises the Nazi Holocaust of disabled people. He faced resistance in trying to stage the play for the very reasons, he argues, that make the Holocaust relevant today: "People don't care about the killing of disabled people. There's still an inherent prejudice towards us, and a desire to see us removed from the face of the earth."

create opportunities for himself and other disabled people. In 1980, he co-founded the theatre company Graeae, and in 1994 he started Sirius Productions, a film production company.

Happy to join the dots linking hidden agendas in health, arts and foreign policy, he baulks at joining a political party: "People like Brown, Blair and Bush should've become actors. Anyone with a hint of insanity – the safest thing to do is become an actor. The stage is a safe place that gives you a licence to be mad. It was a good idea for me to be an actor rather than a megalomaniac leader or dictator. I'd never become a politician."

Megalomania is in his blood: "I've plans to make a documentary investigating the story that my family is directly descended from Genghis

Khan. If it's true, I'm going back to Mongolia to claim my throne. And then America will be targeting Mongolia and its corrupt leader."

Shaban's views on creativity are more democratic: "Everybody should be creative, everyone has that ability. As a child, being bored in hospital, sitting in a cot all day, forced me to be creative. I didn't get a wheelchair till I was about eight. You're just sitting there, so the imagination becomes overactive. I was always making up stories in my head and telling them to the other kids and we would make up stories between us and act them out.

"It was then I got interested in science fiction and UFOs. I've done a lot of research on the 1947 Roswell Incident (a famous alleged UFO crash in New Mexico, USA). I've interviewed relations

of an eyewitness soldier who guarded the spaceship and alien bodies. It seems likely the UFO story is true, but I also take the piss out of it in my film *The Alien who Lived in the Sheds*."

In September, Shaban starts rehearsals to play the Marquis de Sade in the play *Marat/Sade*, but eventually he plans for his career to really take off: "I'd like to be an astronaut on the first mission to Mars. If I start my training now I'll be ready when I'm 70. Disabled people would make good astronauts, especially people with no legs; they'd take up less space and you spend most of your time floating around. Someone like me who only takes up half the room is perfect. In all reports on ETs they're usually my size. They're obviously saving space in the flying saucers." ■



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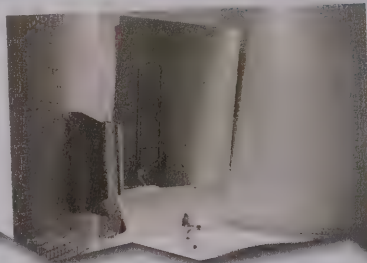
your views



Are you sitting comfortably...

Sunil Peck investigates the chequered history of the accessible toilet

A homeless man once lived in one and a passionate couple had it away in one – at the away end – during a football match at Wigan Athletic. Polish ladders in Hackney fight over the right to kip in one – and one enterprising criminal even used one as a base to intercept a supermarket's takings en route from the till to a back office as they passed through tubes above the till. And sometimes disabled people have even – shock horror – used accessible toilets to relieve themselves. But 40 years ago things were a lot different. There was no disability movement and disability rights were way, way, way in the political agenda. The



Toilets still fail basic tests

As a member for 23 years of the Department of Transport committee on disability, where we used to visit disabled toilets around the country, I, like Bert Massie, never found the perfect design (*Disability Now June, Are You Sitting Comfortably*). Only last week I had to use a disabled toilet. The door had no proper handle, and I could not reach the paper from the seat. How a person with a physical disability could cope I do not know. After 38 years of visiting toilets, I have never found one with sanitary towel or condom machines provided. Very few have a sign that can be read by a blind person. I am sure that if a panel of people with disabilities

drew up the plans, and supervised the building work, there would be a more useable toilet. I would be very willing to help. **Jill Allen-King MBE, by email**

Am I alone in thinking that local authority planning departments have completely given up checking that their own guidelines are followed when disabled toilets are fitted out? I now find it necessary to pre-visit or ask for photographs of access details every time I go away from home. In the case of one Travelodge, the grab-rails were so close that they overlapped the toilet bowl.

George Lithgow, Dumfries

Time to strike a different note on Singer

I have just read the article with Harriet McBryde Johnson (*Disability Now June, Force of Nature*) and was a little disappointed with the eagerness to paint Peter Singer as something of a one-dimensional demon who wants to kill disabled babies. Far from being the murderous monster some would have him painted as, he is simply brave enough to ask difficult questions that need to be addressed about the ethics of life at all costs and the nature of suffering. I think you have painted an

over-simplistic, almost naive picture of a very complex issue. As a disabled person, I disagree with Mr Singer in some areas and agree with him in others, but that's what intelligent adults do: listen to another person's point of view without taking it personally. (Just because the man wants to end the suffering of some babies who are suffering without hope of relief or cure does not mean that he wants to kill every disabled person!)

Miss G Cowley, by email

Train seating needs a first class approach

I'm just reading your guest column on rail travel and I totally agree (*Disability Now June, Guest Column*)! I have a disabled rail card but I don't have a visible disability. If you're in a wheelchair, people are more likely to understand but if you have an invisible disability you have to fight for a seat. Disability rail cards should entitle passengers to first class travel, at least during off-peak times. **Maureen, by phone**

I've just read the article by your guest columnist, and I'm not happy at what she tried to do. She barged into a first class carriage with a

second class ticket. People must be more diplomatic. I have cerebral palsy and I'm a wheelchair-user. I have excellent relationships with travel companies simply by saying please and thank you. She should get a disability rail card and ask the companies for assistance. **Peter, by phone**

Charges break DDA

I am writing this after just having an update assessment for the charges I have to pay for my care. I am expected to pay £178.76, the maximum monthly contribution. Almost each month since I started paying last June (2007), when an invoice arrives I have to dip into my own personal savings (which

wasn't much and is even less now). The Disability Discrimination Act says disabled people should not be treated less favourably than others, so surely making us pay anything towards our care is contradicting and contravening the act. We get treated as second-class citizens enough already, so why should we feel even more degraded?

Name and address supplied

DLA death inflated

When I read the article in your magazine (*Disability Now April, Disability Rights*) stating that the government may be stopping disability living allowance (DLA), I was so worried and distressed that I went to my MP's monthly surgery. He has since written to reassure me that there are no plans to stop this benefit. I suggest that you research these matters in more detail before terrifying us all.

Ms P Proctor, Sparkhill, Birmingham

Editor's note: Two of our writers expressed concern that changes to DLA might be on the welfare reform agenda. The government has said it currently has no plans to make changes to DLA provision but it has not ruled out any such changes and some disabled people continue to have concerns.

Fuel lifeline needed

Both my husband and I are disabled and cannot get around without using our Motability car. Bus passes and train passes are a waste of public money for us. We live in a pretty village deep in the Dorset countryside. I also have depression. My GP has advised me to get out more but the cost of diesel affects us financially. When is this government going to do something positive and throw us and others like us a financial lifeline? A fuel discount would be a start.

Margo Ross, by email

Talk to your store

Jill Honeybun (*Disability Now June, Letters*) is totally wrong. If her blue badge application has not yet been processed she is not entitled to use a disabled parking bay. If and when her badge is issued, will she not be the first to criticise others who are not displaying a badge? As for supermarkets, Morrisons told me they will not police their bays but they were interested in my suggestion that they pass policing to the local authority, which the Department for Transport tells me is legal. Your readers should suggest this to their local supermarkets.

Denis Shaw, by email



LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL / JARROLD PUBLISHING

Signs of progress at Liverpool Cathedral

Readers might like to know that the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool has a signed video tour so that individual deaf people

can do their own guided tours (*Disability Now June, Local Knowledge*). It's good!

Gail Robinson, by email

Care should come first for charities

I have always believed that practical care should be the first thing to motivate a charity, more than equal opportunities. I can only slightly go along with Scope's "Time To Get Equal" tag, which tends to promote the "anything is possible" notion. Nice idea though that is, some people with cerebral palsy still need major league help. It's true we don't want to go back to the "little boy with the calliper" symbol but the message of equality should

not absolutely elbow out the sustained need for care.

Garry Hole, Scope member, Coventry

Trials at every turn for transgendered

How right Ju Gosling is when stating that there is still discrimination (*Disability Now May, Guest Column*), and in noting that those most at risk are from the transgendered community. As a disabled, transgendered person, I encounter discrimination at every turn.

Name and email address supplied

→ Have your say

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- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

andyrickell



Let our people go

Disabled people are being imprisoned in residential homes because of the inflexibility of local authority support packages. So change the law, says **Andy Rickell**

For nearly 40 years, activists have campaigned against institutionalised segregated provision for disabled people, on the basis that it is inconsistent with our equality.

That campaign continues, in forms such as DAN's (Disabled People's Direct Action Network) "Free Our People" campaign.

Suppose, then, that a provider of institutionalised living over several decades recognised that segregated provision was inconsistent with the equality of disabled people to which it is now actively committed, and decided to support disabled people who wanted to move out of a residential home and into their own home. Surely the government would do all it could to support such a move, particularly as it would be consistent with the government's commitment to independent living as stated in its *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* report? Dream on!

The barrier is called "ordinary residence" and

works like this. Each disabled person has a home local authority, where he or she originally came from, and which has the obligation to fund that person's social "care". For those disabled people who were funded to enter a residential home, many went into a home *outside* their local authority area: an "out of county placement". They may have lived in that home for many

Surely the government would do all it could to support disabled people who wanted to move out of a residential home and into their own home? Dream on!

years and are now very much part of the community where they now live.

Their obvious next step, on wanting to move out of the home and into a community, is to move into their own home in the same area where they now live. But if they do that, they would become the funding

responsibility of the local authority where they now live and that local authority will refuse to pay, because they are deemed to be "ordinarily resident" in the place where they originally came from.

Meanwhile, the home local authority will only fund them to live outside a residential home if they move back into the community that they originally came from, away from all the social and support networks they have built up.

So they are stuck, and often their best choice is to stay put, imprisoned against their will and the will of the residential home provider to support them out of segregation.

This is the mother of all postcode lotteries and applies to all disabled people who would like to move from their original home authority with their support package. In short, wherever you start is where you are stuck. Your

freedom of movement is seriously limited.

Can this be sorted out? Easily! Remove the "ordinary residence" rule, and allow disabled people to live where they want and to take their support packages with them. Then make sure the funding issues for the local authorities are sorted out by adjusting the grants they get from central government. This is no more difficult than other adjustments made to local authority grants.

I do not intend to handcuff myself to the minister for disabled people, she will be relieved to hear, but this "ordinary residence" rule is still completely objectionable.

I thought the state was supposed to help disabled people, not be their jailer! Local authorities are given freedom in how they deliver their services, but they should use that to improve disabled people's quality of life, not worsen it!

Free our people, now!

→ Have your say

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Q Due to my husband's ill-health, he can no longer drive and I do not drive myself. However, he owns a car and wishes to be responsible for insuring any driver or named driver. Are there any insurance companies that will do this? I would like any friend or relation to be able to drive my vehicle and be fully covered.

Mrs I Chalke, by email

EP: Most insurance companies will offer cover on this basis (possibly with restrictions on drivers in terms of age or convictions). However, these "any driver" policies can be extremely expensive and it is best to

I would like any friend or relation to be able to drive my vehicle and be fully covered

decide what you really need. For example, how old is the youngest person who is likely to drive the vehicle? Do any potential drivers have motoring convictions? It may be best to talk to one of the specialist brokers dealing with disabled people and carers: Chartwell Insurance (freephone 0800 6521653) or Fish Insurance

(freephone 0500 432141) should be able to help.

Q I have heard that you can leave money to a disabled person in receipt of disability living allowance in a trust and that the person can then still apply for some means-tested benefits. How does this work and what benefits are still available? **Name and address supplied**

AB: A trust is a way of holding an asset. It needs a trustee or trustees, who are responsible for deciding how it is used, and a beneficiary, who in this case would be the disabled person. Under a discretionary trust, payments to the beneficiary are at the discretion of the trustee within the terms of the trust. The value of the trust does not normally count as the beneficiary's capital because they cannot demand payment. This means that money can be left in trust to a disabled person without affecting their capital for the purpose of means-tested benefits such as income support, pension credit or jobseekers allowance. As incapacity benefit is not a means-tested benefit, being a beneficiary of a trust makes no difference to entitlement. The Disability Rights Handbook (published by Disability Alliance) says regular



payments from a trust are usually completely disregarded as income for means-tested benefits. Local authorities have received guidance from the Department of Health on taking income into account when making direct payments, but this makes no reference to trust income. It would be best to check with the local authority what their practice is. As this is a complex area, it is best to consult a solicitor.

Q Because of a couple of accidents involving mobility scooters, Nexus, which runs the Tyne and Wear Metro light railway system, has banned mobility scooter-users unless accompanied by a responsible helper. Are they within their rights? They have placed a helpline number on their website for users to book assistance, but with 24 hours' prior notice. Not everyone knows they want to use the Metro 24 hours in advance. **Name and address supplied**

EW: The Metro is providing a service to members of the public. But, because the service it provides is a transport service, it has different rules than the usual discrimination/non-discrimination. It has to ensure it adheres to health and safety regulations. Also, it needs to make sure other users are not adversely affected by any adjustments. However, within these constraints, the Metro still needs to make reasonable adjustments, which are to be used when disabled people are placed at a substantial disadvantage. I can see how their 24-hour notice or responsible helper rule places you at such a disadvantage. It might be an idea for you to write to them asking how they arrived at these solutions. How will a responsible helper stop an accident? Have they considered offering training to scooter-users? Have they thought about running a

pilot scheme with access reserved to the front carriage to prevent congestion? Have they thought about enforcing a policy of priority for mobility scooters when entering or exiting Metro vehicles? These are just three examples of reasonable adjustments the Metro might consider and might be more reasonable than putting you at a substantial disadvantage with the patronising responsible helper or inconvenient 24-hour notice rule. It would be great if dialogue with them were possible. Litigation should always be a last resort.

Huw Lewis of Nexus says:

"As Metro operator, we were forced to change our rules immediately after two serious accidents. At the same time, we started a review of all aspects of scooter-use, led jointly by Nexus and our access advisory body, Transport For All. This is already looking at the suggestions made by Eleanor Williams, and others from people familiar with Metro, to see how we balance independent travel with the highest safety standards. In normal circumstances, dialogue would come first – in this case we were unable to do that, but the matter is far from closed."

NEW PANEL MEMBERS:



Eleanor Williams is an employment lawyer specialising in discrimination at the firm Darwin Gray*. She is disabled herself and lectures at universities in England, Wales and France. She is a director of the Discrimination Lawyers' Association, legal adviser to RADAR, and a committee member of the Wales Equality and Human Rights Commission.

*www.darwingray.com



Douglas Joy is the senior solicitor at the Disability Law Service and started working in community care and mental health law in 2002 when he joined a legal aid practice in east London. Registered blind, he has had direct experience of the problems disabled people may face.

→ If you have a question for our panel

- phone us 020 7619 7323
- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

THE EXPERTS

RELATIONSHIPS

SIMON PARRITT



Simon is a chartered counselling psychologist

who has also studied psychosexual therapy. He was the only disabled director of the former Association to Aid the Sexual and Personal Relationships of People with a Disability (SPOD).

providers. He is a senior partner with Clydesdale Bank.

PROPERTY



KATE SHEEHAN

Kate is a director of Years Ahead and an occupa-

tional therapist with 20 years' experience and a passionate interest in housing. Years Ahead works with manufacturers to meet the needs of the ageing population.

worked for nearly 25 years as a disability journalist and consultant. He is an adviser on the Disabled Living Foundation's helpline.

TRAVEL



ANDY WRIGHT

Andy is a disabled travel industry

professional with over 25 years' experience and is managing director of Accessible Travel, a specialist tour operator providing holidays for people with mobility impairments.

MOTORING

ED PASSANT



Ed is chief executive of the

Forum of Mobility Centres. The centres provide driver and passenger assessment for disabled people across the UK.

FINANCE

DAVID CLARKE



David has spent 14 years in

banking and has worked for three leading financial service

EQUIPMENT



JOHN MANDRAK

John, who is blind, has

MONEY, LEGAL &

BENEFITS



ALAN BARTON

Alan is a social policy adviser for

Citizens Advice, and an adviser at Rickmansworth Citizens Advice Bureau. He has a particular interest in benefits issues.

backchat

Skating on thin ice



Intriguing words from Lord Addington during

the Lords debate on disability legislation.

The Liberal Democrat, who has dyslexia, told how lobbyists and ministers have repeatedly raised fears about the risks of introducing disability-related laws.

He added: "Every single government and lobby group have said at various times, 'We cannot do that. It will be too expensive. It will stop everything happening.

We will be sued if we put ramps in shop doorways... They will be far too expensive, and if people skateboard on them we will be sued and go to prison.' I heard that on numerous occasions."

So, the truth at last. It has taken so long to secure half-decent disability legislation because politicians were scared that hordes of teenage skateboarders would cause death and destruction across the land by using wheelchair ramps to practice their double back flips. Glad we've got that straight.

Questions raised by military manoeuvres

Backchat was delighted to discover that our friends in the US military are taking a keen interest in *Disability Now's* website.

Apparently, at least one American of a military persuasion has been paying regular visits to our pages.

Was it the investigation into access at spa resorts that sucked them in? Or maybe the report from our glamorous relaunch party last autumn?

Top secret answers on a postcard...

Why minister has tied himself in knots

Much criticism over the last few months about the government's inflexible position on incapacity benefit reform.

Perhaps this is no coincidence, because Backchat can report – thanks to a mole among Islington's yummy mummies – that work and pensions secretary James Purnell is just as inflexible when working out on his yoga mat as he is when drafting his latest welfare reform diktat.



Stewart was alarmed to discover that Ruth would rather eat than have the "much needed bed bath" he'd suggested.

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No welcome in the valleys

Post office closures are hitting disabled people in Wales particularly hard, says
Rosaleen Moriarty Simmonds

Cashier Number Five please." This pleasant yet automated voice is not some quirky creation for *Doctor Who* by Russell T Davies OBE – currently Cardiff's most famous export – but the greeting from the post office at my local Asda, telling me of the next available cashier.

Don't get me wrong: Cashier Number Five is a very nice woman but it is just not the same as the old-fashioned post office where my mother used to gossip with her friends and collect the family allowance.

The local post office of yesterday was not just a place for posting letters. You could buy sweets and a host of other things.

Remember those huge glass sweet jars towering at the back of the counter? You'd spend what seemed like hours in that Aladdin's cave, deciding how to spend the 20p pocket money that your grandmother had given you.

For many, those days are just a memory, with MPs

backing a decision to close up to 3,000 post offices across the UK.

In Wales, the impact on disabled people of these closures is great, as dozens of small post offices have already closed and more will follow.

In 2003, residents in the Willowtown area of Ebbw Vale made headlines with their fight to save their local post office. Sadly, it closed in May 2004 and four others in the town followed shortly afterwards. The only

In Wales, high levels of rural living make it essential to deliver services locally

sweetener was a proposal to make the town's main post office more accessible. All very well, but if you are disabled and don't have access to your own transport, a taxi journey to cash your benefit cheque could cost as much as £4.

The Post Office recently announced that six post



STEPHEN GAMES

offices in rural Brecon and Radnorshire would close.

This continued closure programme will have a devastating effect on communities throughout Wales.

In Wales, high levels of rural living, chronic sickness and a disabled and ageing population make it essential to deliver services locally.

We need to recognise that

in order to save our post offices, we have to use them and use all the services that they offer.

And so, while it was nice speaking with Cashier Number Five, next time I'll visit Maresh, our local sub-post master, support our locality and remember that, for others, the simple pleasure of going to a post office has gone forever.

→ Have your say

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- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

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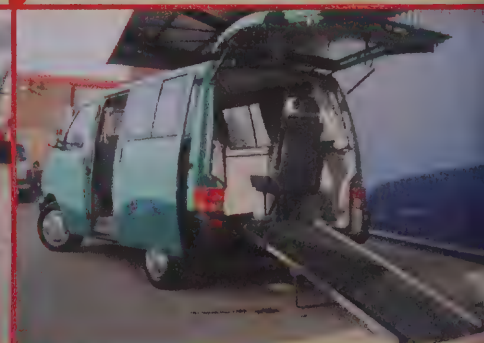
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upclose&personal

In May, disability activist Sue Maynard Campbell (*photo, right*) died. Her sister and fellow campaigner, **Alice Maynard** (*photo, left*), reflects on a relationship that went beyond family ties to tackle the barriers they both faced in an unreceptive world



It was so self-evident that I didn't even notice she'd given me the key to my freedom and my future.

Sue had just been speaking to the Class of '91 at Ashridge – my fellow MBA students and me – about disability. This was different from what I knew, though. She introduced us to the social model, using an everyday example of non-disabled people being provided with the access that disabled people are denied.

Throughout our work together, she was always there to keep me on the straight and narrow

For me, it was the start of a new understanding of disability. For years I had struggled hard to be "normal". I had a normal career, a relatively normal

house and a relatively normal car – indeed, as normal a life as I ever could hope for, I thought.

But things were difficult and I was acutely aware that my normality was built on flimsy foundations. I realised just how flimsy when I emerged from the MBA and failed miserably to get a job.

Sue showed me that I was already normal and didn't need to work at it. With her enthusiasm for spreading social model principles, she encouraged me to join her in setting up Equal Ability – the consultancy company she ran till the day she died.

Sue was a trailblazer. She was the first student at Nottingham University with such high support needs; and she became a solicitor in the days when it was very difficult for women, never mind a woman with Sue's level of impairment.

In 1981, the International Year of Disabled People, when I was still distancing myself from all things "disabled", Sue was starting to find her political bearings. She thereafter consolidated her links to the disabled people's movement through her work in the Association of Disabled Professionals

and her involvement in the establishment of BCDP (the British Council of Disabled People), now UKDPC (the United Kingdom's Disabled People's Council).

Throughout our work together, she was always there to keep me on the straight and narrow. She had a clear understanding of what a social model approach would be in all situations and she always let me know if I was missing the point! And no doubt she'll still be there, making her views known. I'll just have to listen a little more closely.

Sisters in arms



ANDREW FLOWER

Cutting it! Seema's salon days

Running a hairdressing salon might not seem like the easiest way of making a living if you're visually-impaired, but for Seema Flower it has proved the perfect career move. **Nuala Calvi** reports

Four years ago, Seema Flower was an education officer for the RNIB. With her eyesight deteriorating due to retinitis pigmentosa, she decided she wanted to move out of the disability field.

"I was finding it stressful enough dealing with my own problems around losing my sight, and dealing with my students' problems at the same time was hard. So, I went part-time and decided to do something a bit different.

"I knew if I was going to lose my sight, working for someone else was likely to be tricky because there's a lot of discrimination out there, so starting my own business seemed like the perfect thing to do."

Seema was inspired to move into the world of hairdressing after experiencing one too many bad haircuts from salons that

were less than enlightened about customers with visual impairments.

"I've been to salons where they put a gown on you without telling you that's what they're about to do, then they tell you to meet them by the sinks for a hair wash but don't show you where to go. And they would just do the haircut without describing what they were doing.

If they're talking to a visually-impaired person, they have to describe exactly what they're doing

"Some places wouldn't tell me how much the cut cost, and if there was a big queue behind me I'd be too embarrassed to ask, so I'd just give them my card and sign the slip without knowing."

At Seema's salon, Colour Nation, her staff's disability awareness is as important as their scissor skills.

"If they're talking to a visually-impaired person they have to describe exactly what they're doing as they go along, especially if they're about to use a razor or scissors.

"They have to know how to talk to disabled people so that customers don't feel patronised, and to be on hand to help but not to do things without asking first."

With a visually-impaired boss around, staff have also learnt to be more aware of the space and not leave objects such as colour carts lying around.

"Of course, in a busy environment like a hairdressers it's not perfect – occasionally, someone will leave a broom on the top of the stairs by accident and I'll have to pull them up on it,

but in general they're very aware now."

The Covent Garden salon has been designed with visibility in mind; walking in, one is struck by how light and bright the interior is, thanks to the well-chosen colour scheme, light wood floors and spot lighting – with dark coloured chairs and black nosing on steps to provide contrast. The salon's price lists are available in large print if required.

As a result, Seema has several visually-impaired customers who have become regulars, although she never set out to target a disabled clientele.

Her own access needs are met through Access to Work, which provides an assistant to help her with tasks such as reading. However, finding computer software that is accessible has proved difficult.

"The software I need, they

won't do in an accessible format. And things like price lists and product info from companies like Wella and L'Oreal just aren't available in accessible formats. It is a constant battle – with the banks, landlords, everyone, to get what you need, but you just have to keep on pushing them."

While Seema's role is a managerial one, she still finds there are people who balk at the idea of a visually-impaired person running the show.

"Some of them think, 'If the owner is blind, how are they going to do my hair?' But like any business, as a manager you don't need to be able to do the thing yourself, you just need to be able to understand how it's done.

"The suppliers also sometimes act surprised when they meet me. But if I'm choosing products, I just need to know what the information on the back of the packet says, and then it's up to my stylist to tell me whether it's worked or not."

Four years on, Seema's business now employs 13 staff and has grown from six hairdressing 'stations' to 17. The downstairs office area has been converted into hairdressing space and her salon is now a leader in

colouring and hair straightening techniques.

So does she have any regrets about striking out on her own?

"Sometimes I think it'd be nice to have a nine to five job again and not have the responsibilities I do. Running your own business means you have to be prepared to put in over and above the normal working hours, because you're on call 24 hours a day if something goes wrong.

"But I'm glad I've stuck with it. Owning my own company has taught me so many different skills and I'm a much more confident person as a result."

• **Colour Nation is at 53 Endell Street, London WC2H 9AJ (tel: 020 7836 8883). Haircuts start at £28, highlights £42**



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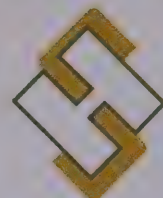
Sussex Health Care

Rapkyns Care Centre, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Beech Lodge, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex

Norfolk Lodge, Horsham, West Sussex

Redwood House, Broadbridge Heath, West Sussex



Sussex Health Care is an award winning group of care homes that were founded in 1985. Sussex Health Care now operate 15 care homes, predominantly in the West Sussex area, providing nearly 450 beds, incorporating specialist care provision as well as care for older people. Sussex Health Care currently have vacancies in two of our care homes:



Rapkyns Care Centre opened 2 new bungalows in January 2007. The home is based in Broadbridge Heath and caters for young people with complex and multiple needs. The home comprised of three bungalows for ten people and one for eleven which are purpose built and fully accessible for wheelchairs. Each single room provides en-suite facilities and track hoisting is available throughout. There is one bed available for respite care. There is a day centre on site with swimming pool and IT suite. Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy are available to service users as is 24 hour nursing care. A Speech and Language Therapist is also employed.

Beech Lodge is a purpose built bungalow which provides two wings of 10 bedrooms all with en-suite facilities providing care for young adults with multiple and complex needs. The registered care home with nursing has been equipped with all the latest technological aids and provides a safe, comfortable, homely environment for our service users. Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service user's needs and wishes at the centre of our service. Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

Sussex Health Care also currently have residential vacancies in two of our care homes:

Both **Norfolk Lodge** and **Redwood House** have been skilfully converted to accommodate 8 people in each home and offer a specialised residential environment for adults with learning disabilities who may also present with moderately challenging behaviour.

Person centred planning is at the forefront of our philosophy with the service users needs and wishes at the centre of our service.

Our philosophy is to provide the very best care in a safe and comfortable environment whilst respecting service user's rights to live as normal a life as possible.

In 2008 the group are developing 2 new purpose built facilities

Beechcroft Care Centre, West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead.

This service will provide 2 purpose built 10 bedded bungalows with track hoisting throughout and en-suite facilities to all rooms for people with physical and learning disabilities. The home will also have its own hydrotherapy pool and a separate swimming pool.

Trained nurses, keyworkers and physiotherapists will be available over a 24 hour period. This service is due to open in May 2008.

Horncastle Care Centre, Plawhatch Lane, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead.

This service will provide a purpose built residential service with 24 hour nursing support for people with acquired brain injury and neurological conditions. This service is due to open in May 2008.

For further information

Please contact Corrine Wallace, Head of Specialist Care Services and Future Development,

Tel: (01403) 217338 • Fax: 01403 210424 • email: corrine.wallace@sussexhealthcare.org • web: www.sussexhealthcare.org



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



083

localknowledge

Flushed with success

An ID card scheme dreamt up by a disgruntled disabled toilet-user has proved its worth, says **Sunil Peck**

There was a time when people would confront Terry Gallagher and swear at him for using disabled toilets. Admittedly he does not look like a disabled person and uses no mobility aids but he has hidden impairments and the extra space in the toilet lets him kneel down and empty his stoma.

One exchange left him “absolutely steaming” and he vowed to put an end to the humiliation and abuse for good.

“I came out of the disabled toilet once and was accosted by a six-foot-six attendant who barred my way and started yelling that I should use the ordinary toilets. I said: ‘I’m a disabled person.’ He said: ‘Don’t talk rubbish, you’re obviously not disabled.’” Gallagher produced his RADAR key in an attempt to convince the attendant that he was not a fraud but the attendant said that anybody could get hold of one from eBay.

The attendant only backed down when Gallagher went into intimate details about his impairments and how he

cleaned out his stoma.

Gallagher’s solution to ending this kind of confrontation was an identity card that would include his picture and a signature of authenticity from the local council.

In October he approached Nottinghamshire, his county council, told them of his experiences and put forward his ID card proposal. The council liked the idea and agreed to a six-month pilot scheme. The scheme was a success and the cards are now available to disabled people all over the county.

He says the card has made a world of difference. A few weeks ago, he was waiting to use the disabled toilet in Ikea when a woman

Gallagher says there are huge benefits beyond pacifying angry toilet attendants

challenged him. “She said: ‘What are you doing using this toilet?’ I whipped my card out and she said sorry with no fuss.”

The cards are available to people registered as blind



Terry Gallagher (left) with county councillor Alan Rhodes

or partially-sighted, blue badge holders, people, like Gallagher, with a stoma and those in receipt of disability living allowance, industrial injury disablement benefit or constant attendance allowance.

All applicants have to give the council a signed passport photograph and this gets embedded into the card.

The council has had excellent feedback but has

yet to hear from other councils looking to roll out similar schemes.

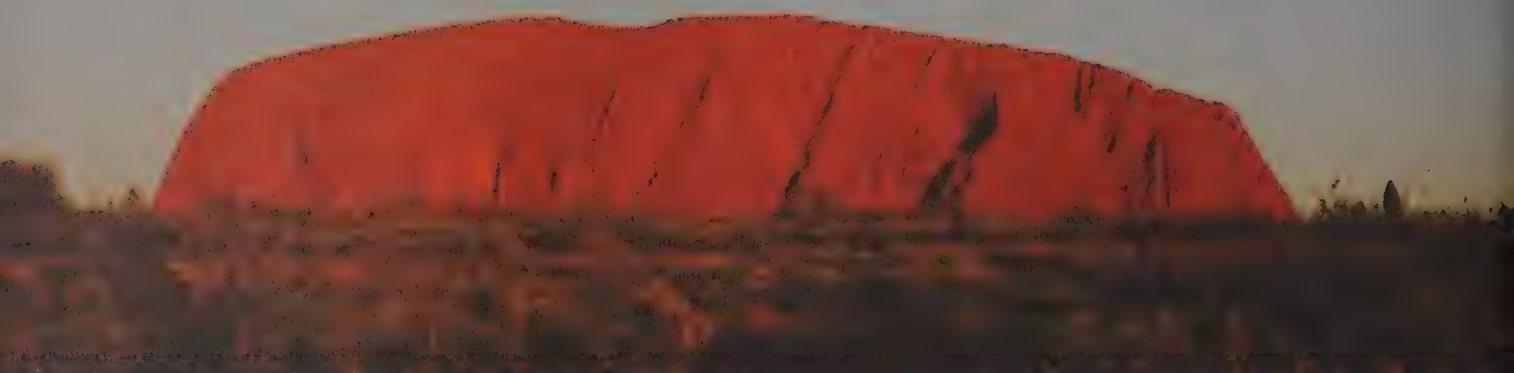
Gallagher says there are huge benefits beyond pacifying angry toilet attendants. For instance, his impairments mean he cannot lift heavy items. Assistants in shops used to give him odd looks when he asked for help. Now he does not have to explain and they do all they can to help.

→ CONTACT US

Do you know of an innovative, small-scale, pilot project, ideally one run by disabled people themselves?

- write to us **Disability Now**, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

Around the **world** in twenty years



Walt Balenovich has spent the last 20 years backpacking around the world in his trusty blue wheelchair. Now he has written a book about his travels

I began travelling when I was young enough not to be embarrassed by participating in competitive sports. My wheelchair basketball team was not very successful (we lost one match 166-4) but one thing that sports offered me was a chance to travel. First, we travelled around my home



Walt at Table Mountain, Cape Town, South Africa. Above, Uluru in Australia

province of Ontario, in Canada, by bus and later, as we became more organised, we flew around North America to participate in large basketball tournaments.

My first overseas adventure was in 1988, when I visited a university friend who was nearing the end of a three-year stint in Nakuru, Kenya. There was no aisle chair to help me off the plane. Instead, three Kenyans lifted me out of my seat and carried me off to the lounge to await reunification with my blue chair. With my friend's help I was able to get in and out of his 4x4 and venture right across the country to enjoy a camping safari on the Masai Mara and a tropical weekend on the Indian Ocean in Mombasa. The only real problem was that my chair got a flat tyre. I hadn't thought to bring a

24-inch replacement so we had to go to a bike shop, which sold only 26-inch tubes. Their solution was to lop off two inches and glue the ends together! It was a rudimentary fix, but it worked – although it punctured almost the minute I returned home.

Over the last 20 years, I have backpacked through 28 countries in all six habitable continents. I work as an IT consultant and after every contract I go travelling, always on a budget. When I return home, I look for another

Did you know?

Although Argentinians may make a kissing noise to attract a waiter, foreigners should not do so. And pouring wine backwards into a glass indicates hostility.

contract. I think the travelling is infectious and I am single, so I can go whenever I want.

In 2006 I visited Africa again, this time alone and backpacking through South Africa and Zambia. By staying at hostels and meeting new friends, I was able to share a car down to the Cape and explore Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg and Soweto. I did, though, have a bad experience with Nationwide Airlines at Johannesburg Airport, where they refused to board me until I paid \$50 for a Personal Assistance Unit (PAU), a box on the end of a forklift used to board passengers who can't use stairs. I told them I wouldn't pay, as it was a form of discrimination. I stuck my foot in the departure lounge door, exclaiming: "Apartheid is not dead in South Africa!"

Finally, some fellow passengers decided to help and some of the airline's staff also assisted as they had become embarrassed. At the end of the flight, the plane staff carried me off, though they weren't supposed to.

Sadly, the adventure ended suddenly in Zambia when I fell out of my chair and broke my leg! I was really annoyed because the next day I was scheduled for a safari in Botswana. I had to cut the trip short and also missed my return to Cape Town to explore the Garden Route, which runs east from Cape Town along the coast.

I travelled alone extensively on EuRail just over a decade ago and for the most part things went quite well. The staff at the stations always helped, except in Croatia, which had just become an independent state. I was surprised at the lack of help in getting off the train. Finally, the lady mopping the floor enlisted some assistance. If she hadn't stepped in, I might have stayed on that train and gone right back to Vienna!



PAUL KENNEDY/LONELY PLANET

Bus tours in Chile are usually a no-go zone for wheelchair-users but Walt's bus driver in Santiago even helped him with toilet stops on a journey to Patagonia

One problem I encountered was my own fault. I always try to book rooms on the first floor where possible. In North America, the first floor is the ground floor but elsewhere in the world the floors begin at zero, so the first floor is the second floor! I really had a

problem with that until I smartened up.

South America was fantastic! I had long postponed a trip there out of fear of the unknown but my visit to Chile, Argentina and Uruguay went really well. In fact, when I was at the hostel in Santiago, the operator of a bus tour to Patagonia asked me to come along. I mentioned that usually most bus tours are off-limits to independent wheelchair travellers. Jorge smiled and said that both he and the bus driver would be happy to help me, including getting on and off the toilet. They helped me the entire week and by the end of the trip we were calling ourselves the three "hermanos", or brothers.

I really come alive in Asia. I think the vibrancy of the continent is contagious. Everywhere I went, whether Singapore, Indonesia, Fiji, Thailand, Hong Kong or Japan, people fell over themselves to help. On arriving in Tokyo, I took the chair-friendly subway into Tokyo, only to find that the subway station I wanted to use had no elevator! The problem was solved when six subway



YASUFUMI NISHI/JNTO

Exotic theatrical masks in the Flea Market of Setagaya in Japan are used in performances of traditional Noh plays

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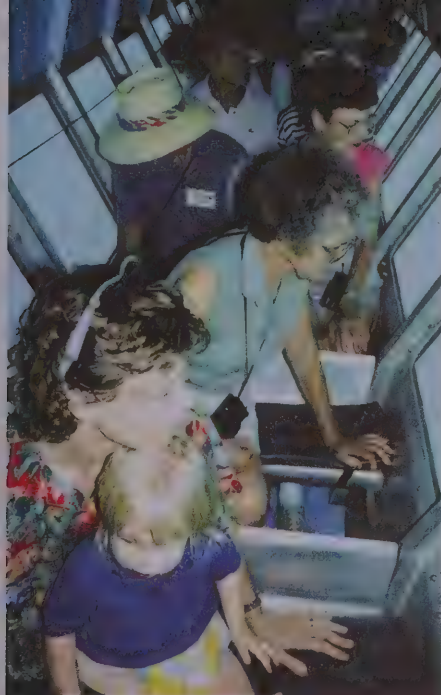


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Above left: Semi-submersibles provide fantastic views of coral formations on Australia's Great Barrier Reef.
Right: A temple in Thailand

attendants appeared and lifted me up the numerous flights of stairs to the surface and then arranged a taxi to my hotel at their expense! In Thailand, I used a local taxi-driver so much for the first three days that for the remainder of my visit he wouldn't accept any more money. He became a good friend and introduced me to his wife and sister.

Prior to visiting New Zealand for the first time, I could not find a place to stay in Christchurch. Rex, a bloke on a Bulletin Board System discussion board (pre-internet), read about my problem and took it upon himself to drive all over town checking out possible

Everywhere I went, whether Singapore, Indonesia, Fiji, Thailand, Hong Kong or Japan, people fell over themselves to help

accommodation. He then reported back to me and picked me up at the airport. He later moved to Australia and we have become great friends.

In Cairns, the staff of the catamaran



JOHN PRING

trip to the Great Barrier Reef assisted me down onto a semi-submersible so that I would be able to enjoy the underwater sea life. Later, the staff were also able to arrange a small watercraft and took me on a personal tour around the small island we were lunching on.

Over those 20 years, I have found that disabled people are treated with respect in western countries. Even in less developed countries I was always treated properly, although I think that local disabled people are not generally treated as well. In 2005, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, I once observed a father and his disabled daughter waiting in line to board a ferry. They had to wait until everyone else had boarded before they themselves could board. In North

America, most people would have let them jump the queue. It was a small thing but it left a big impression.

There have been some barriers during my travels. Tour buses are problematic when travelling alone. Sometimes, bus drivers will help you on or off so you can take the tour but most won't. I was unable to visit the Kakadu National Park in Australia for this reason. Sometimes washrooms



Did you know?

In Thailand, almost every home and business has a spirit house in front of it, usually red with gold linings, to house and placate the spirits of ancestors and previous inhabitants.



JOHN PRING



Above: The Australian Outback. Right: Walt secures a stunning vantage point above the Grand Canyon

can be inaccessible, too. But when this happens, I just use a facecloth and wash outside, sometimes for a week or more. But I'm not bothered.

As for my favourite country in all those I've visited: Kenya for the wildlife, Argentina for its natural diversity, New Zealand and Australia for their scenery and hospitality, and Japan and Thailand for their exotic and unique cultures. The next destinations on my list are India, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

As for access, Holland was the most accessible, Hungary the least. Earlier in my adventures, I would become downhearted if confronted with access barriers but quickly learnt that the

world isn't built with a ramp. When my buddies wanted to climb a volcano in Chile, I just gave them my camera and had a beer at the bottom, enjoying the view and the plume of steam coming out of the top.

Over the years, you learn the ins and the outs of travel. I'm not as homesick now as I used to be before the internet. And as inclusive tourism starts to grow with the ageing populations, I believe that more and more people with mobility impairments will do what I have done and travel the world. ■

• Walt Balenovich is author of *Travels in a Blue Chair: Alaska to Zambia, Ushuaia to Uluru*; ISBN 0-595-46149-2, published by iUniverse. Copies, priced \$25.95 (about £13), are available from Amazon or Tesco, or via your local bookshop. For more information, visit www.bluechairbook.com

Did you know?

Hong Kong has overtaken Tokyo as the world's most expensive city. And more than 10 million Indonesians are boy scouts.

TRAVEL TIPS

Phone ahead

Make sure your airline accepts lone disabled passengers. Some airlines, such as Ryanair, make you ring a number to inform them of your booking so they can limit the number of disabled passengers on each flight.

Keep the first nights simple

Use the internet to book an accessible place to stay for the first few nights of your trip. Once you have arrived, you can talk to locals in the tourist industry to determine what else is on offer.

People are usually helpful

Don't be afraid to ask: an activity that seems impossible may be within reach. People may be able to help you up and down stairs. Usually, people will fall over themselves to be helpful.

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tried & tested

The long and winding road from A to B

With satellite navigation devices becoming more accurate and accessible, **Sunil Peck** and **Paul Carter** set out to give two of the top models a test-drive – one on foot and one by car

Device: TomTom One XL Europe
Starting point: Home, East Finchley, London N2
Target: Esporta Health Club, Friern Barnet, London N11
Mode of travel: Car
Distance: 3.2 miles
Time taken: 20 minutes
Score: Nine out of ten

While Sunil was off tackling the buses and backstreets of the People's Republic of Islington, I opted for the (relative) sanctuary of the car, relying on a TomTom One XL Europe to navigate me through the nightmare of north London's roads.

First impressions of the unit are good. The XL has an extra large, 4.3" display, and is operated entirely by touch apart from the power button on the top.

It found satellites relatively quickly, taking roughly 30 seconds to lock on.

My biggest apprehension was the touchscreen. I've had mixed success with touchscreen devices in the past, as some are too sensitive, making them



JAMIE TROUNCE

virtually unusable for someone like me without digits.

Thankfully, there were no such problems with the TomTom. The onscreen keyboard responded very well, and picked up the intended letters pretty accurately. There were a couple of times where I had to go back and try again, but that is to be expected.

Out on the road, the unit is very simple to follow, giving clear, loud instructions. The on-screen maps are in colourful high contrast, making them viewable very easily at a glance, and potentially usable even without sound.

The biggest issue I had was with the physical

placement of the unit in the car. The suction bracket refused to stick to my dashboard, so had to be attached to the windscreen, to the right of my steering wheel. As I drive with my right arm in a cup socket, this meant I was unable to operate the TomTom at all once I was driving.

Fortunately, this didn't prove to be a major issue, as it automatically recalculates the route should you make a wrong turn or take an alternative route to that suggested, so you shouldn't have to access the unit unless you need any of the extra features.

At one point I deliberately tried to confuse it by taking a wrong turn into a residential

area, but it quickly recalculated, before finally losing patience and telling me to turn around.

The TomTom One XL Europe is one of the better satellite navigation systems I have used, and handled pretty much everything I could throw at it on a relatively short journey.

It is quick, simple to use, and works straight out of the box. There are cheaper options available, and it may not be worth the extra money for full European mapping, but if you use the car regularly and have difficulty with regular maps, it is well worth a second look.



*TomTom One XL Europe is available from most good high-street electrical and motoring retailers, with an RRP of £199. For more information, visit www.tomtomonexl.co.uk

Device: Wayfinder Access
Starting point: Disability Now offices, Market Road, London N7
Target: Masala Zone restaurant, Upper Street, London N7
Mode of travel: Bus and on foot
Distance: 1.6 miles
Time taken: 40 minutes
Score: Eight out of ten

I try to avoid travelling by bus because I can never tell where I am and there are hardly ever announcements telling me where my stop is. But I was so impressed with the audible information Wayfinder Access gave me when I tested it on the bus, that I'm seriously tempted to try using buses from now on.

The application installs onto any mobile phone which runs the Symbian operating system, and works in conjunction with text-to-speech software like Talks and Mobile Speak. Installation is a breeze, although you need to establish a Bluetooth connection between your phone and a small GPS receiver which enables satellites to track your location.

My past experience of using phone-based GPS products in built-up areas is that receivers can



KELLY MULLAN

struggle to receive a satellite signal. But receivers must have improved, because the signal didn't drop once.

The interface for searching and setting

I was so impressed that I'm seriously tempted to try using buses from now on

destinations on the phone is easy to use. Once en route, Wayfinder Access

announces the distance to the next turning and which direction to take. On the bus, I used the joystick on my phone to flip between screens and peruse information like nearby shops and bars and the names of roads coming up.

When I got off the bus, I knew I was a five minute walk and a couple of streets away from the restaurant. But 15 minutes later I was lost. Wayfinder Access had not uttered a word for a while and after poking

around in the menus I discovered the voice guidance had become muted. Once I'd reactivated it, I found the restaurant without a hitch. But it did take me a while to adjust to the software's inability to calculate distances to turnings to the nearest metre. It would announce a turning was 25 metres ahead, when actually it was only 5 or 10 metres away. On this occasion, there were no other side streets nearby, so I did not find myself walking down the wrong street.

It's also worth bearing in mind that using Wayfinder Access leaves your phone's battery flat after a couple of hours and you incur charges when the programme goes online to download map data and plot routes.

Wayfinder Access is a helpful mobility aid and easy to use. I also like the fact that, unlike a lot of adaptive software which is self-contained, it runs on a mobile phone so, apart from the small GPS receiver, you don't have to carry any extra pieces of hardware.

*Wayfinder Access is available from www.talknav.com or tel: 0844 412 1062. A GPS receiver costs £56.95 and the software costs £259.99

roadtest



MOBILITY ROADSHOW

Silver lining for Mobility show's crowds

The Mobility Roadshow celebrated its 25th anniversary this year. **Douglas Campbell** reports on a showcase for some of the best the mobility industry has to offer

June saw the Mobility Roadshow arrive for the first time at Stoneleigh Park near Coventry. This was a welcome return to the Midlands after two years at Kemble Airfield near Cirencester.

This year marked the 25th anniversary of the roadshow, which started as a very low-key affair in 1983 at Crowthorne in Berkshire. When Ann Frye persuaded the Department of Transport to try out her idea of a motor show for disabled people, can anyone have imagined that

it would grow to the scale of this year's event?

Just as the roadshow has evolved, so have the style and range of vehicles, adaptations and equipment on show. And one of the big stories at this year's roadshow was the Wav-Evolution from Aspect Conversions and Sirius Automotive (www.wav-evolution.co.uk). For the first time, a wheelchair-user can stay in their wheelchair in the front seat of a car and all the rear seats are available as normal. Based on the Kia Sedona, the adaptation leaves all of the other six seats in place and the boot

totally unaffected.

Some serious engineering development has been undertaken to attach a section of floor and a ramp

to the front passenger side door. With the door open, the wheelchair rolls up the ramp and is easily locked down. Closing the door



MARK DAVIDSSON

Douglas tries out the Wav-Evolution from Aspect Conversions and Sirius Automotive

positions the disabled passenger in a superbly comfortable position next to the driver and there is none of the heaving and pushing involved in transferring from wheelchair to car-seat. Having launched the passenger version, work is well underway to produce a drive-from-wheelchair model.

The development of the Wav-Evolution shows that here in the UK we have some of the best engineers in the world and they are producing some really imaginative, innovative solutions to meet the mobility needs of disabled people. This is hardly surprising, given the way we lead the world in automotive engineering. Many of the world's leading car manufacturers have their vehicles designed here and nearly every Formula One racing car depends on British engineering.

Ten exhibitors at the roadshow this year were at the first event in 1983: Chartwell Insurance, Mobilise, DVLA, Ford, Gowrings, Honda, Motability, Steering Developments, Unwins and Vauxhall.

Vauxhall (www.vauxhall.co.uk) was showing its brand new Agila.

Mobilise (www.mobilise.info) launched its campaign to prevent disabled people being disadvantaged by the planned congestion charge



MARK DAVIDSON



MARK DAVIDSON

Top, Douglas and the Vauxhall Agila. Above, Autochair's new "Up and Out" seat

in Manchester.

Steering Developments (www.steeringdevelopments.co.uk) launched its latest rooftop carrier for folded wheelchairs, which can lift up to 33kg.

Autochair (www.autochair.co.uk) has been to the Czech Republic to find its new "Up and Out" seat that helps people to a standing position from their car seat. Available with a choice of seats, this unit makes getting out so much easier for those who find standard car seats

too low to get up from.

Land Rover was there, but their staff did not seem to want to meet anyone. Hiding inside their trailer with no-one offering to talk to us or operate the wheelchair lift, we don't know what they had to offer disabled people. They were not alone in ignoring visitors to their stand, and wearing a "Press" badge often made no difference!

Clearly, some exhibitors were getting it right as there were always too many

people visiting the *Disability Now* stand for me to ever get near and the Blue Badge Network stand was busy with people asking questions about parking rules and the London congestion charge.

For those not looking for vehicles, there was a wealth of choice among the other stands. Wheelchairs and scooters for every age and in styles to suit sporty types and those with really complex needs. Information and advice from the Highways Agency, Department for Transport, Forum of Mobility Centres, Department for Work and Pensions, www.direct.gov.uk, Driving Standards Agency, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and others. The Financial Ombudsman Service (www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk) was telling visitors how it can help if you've got a complaint you can't sort out with your bank or insurance company, or with the business that gave you a loan.

The roadshow seemed smaller this year, but that might have been due to the site being smaller and more compact. (There were 151 exhibitors this year compared to 221 last year.) If you missed it, the next one is at Kemble on 4, 5 and 6 June, 2009.

• www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

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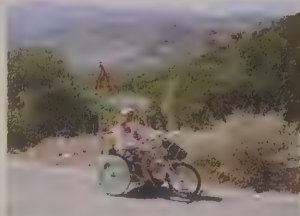
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Patsy Watson

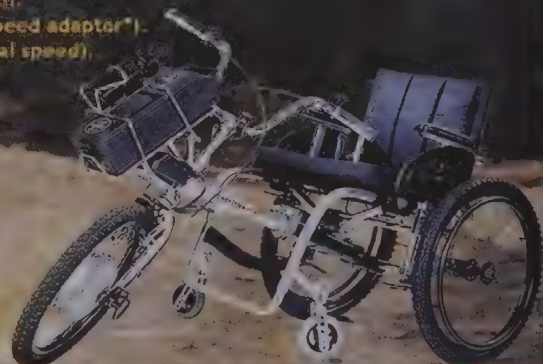
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roadtest



ALASTAIR WALKER

Journalist **Chris Dabbs**, who is paraplegic, says the revamped Martin Conquest trike provides a head-turning thrill ride

The Martin Conquest trike is a marriage of car and bike technology, with the front end, engine and fuel tank of a BMW R1200R motorcycle mated to parts of the top end of the kit car world.

The Conquest has had a complete revamp since the first prototypes in 2005, making it stronger and lighter. The new package will hit about 125mph flat out and see off most BMW and Mercedes drivers at the traffic lights by hitting 60mph in 7 seconds.

Getting into the riding position is straightforward. A remote control rear ramp allows you to pull yourself up on two rails, then forwards to

the "office" where an electronic locking clamp holds you tight. You have to pull a little wheelie to get onto the standard ramp, but electric wheelchair-users can have a longer ramp with a shallower gradient.

You're now ready to go, and popping down to the shops suddenly becomes a more attractive option, not least because everyone will stop and stare as you ride past – the Conquest has the same presence as a Ferrari or an armoured car!

The view ahead is familiar to anyone who's ever ridden a bike with throttle, clutch, brake lever and electrics in conventional positions. Gear changing is taken care of by an electronic push-button

cluster under the left-hand grip, which includes a reverse.

You sit a lot higher than a conventional bike, so you're almost as high as a 4 x 4, but the high sides mean you sit "in" the trike, so it feels very

snug, and you can have the central channel tailored to your wheelchair width too.

With 536 kilos to manoeuvre and no power steering the Conquest needs a lot more steering input than a motorcycle, but once it's on the move it lightens up considerably and you can fling it around if you've got the shoulder muscles to cope. I was testing it on the same Millbrook banked bowl in Bedfordshire that recently had an Aston Martin car back-flipping for a stunt in the latest Bond movie, but I never felt like the Conquest was going to get me into trouble on the dips, hairpin bends and S-bends of each lap. The brakes are strong but light enough to apply, the traction was great and the sensory rush of the wind, whining gears and brute acceleration took me back to my bike riding days.



The Martin Conquest costs £19,948 and is available on the Motability hire purchase scheme. There are also plenty of options, like occasional passenger seat, flyscreen, six-CD auto changer, metallic paint and luggage racks. Engine 108bhp at 6750rpm, fuel consumption: 40mpg, six-speed gearbox plus mechanical reverse gear.

sportnow

By Paul Carter

GB squad takes shape

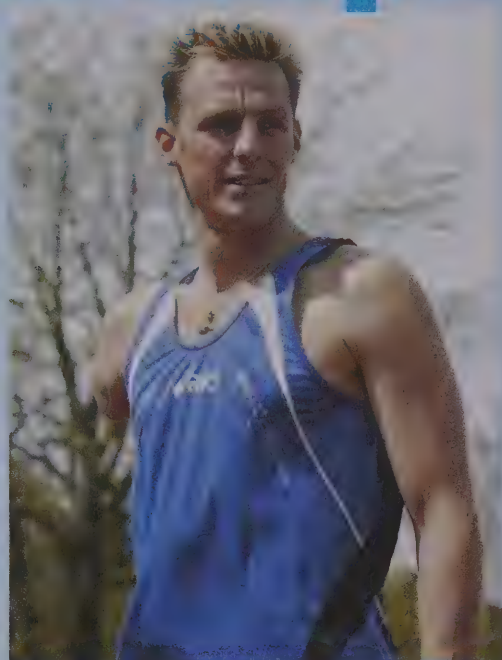
Great Britain looks set to take a team of over 200 athletes to the Paralympics in Beijing this summer, with almost all sports declaring their final squads as *Disability Now* went to press.

The ParalympicsGB team will compete in a total of 18 sports at the Games, including first-time events five-a-side football and adaptive rowing alongside more traditional events such as athletics and swimming.

Wheelchair rugby captain Andy Barrow said: "It's a tremendous honour to be selected to represent my country. It's going to be my second Paralympics but this time I will be captain, which is fantastic."

The wheelchair rugby squad is also notable for containing Josie Pearson, Britain's first ever female player.

Paralympics GB chief executive Phil Lane said: "I am delighted to see that Josie is among the squad as she will become Britain's first ever female wheelchair rugby player at a Paralympic Games, which shows that the



sport in Britain is growing and developing in its appeal and competitive scope."

Jon Pollock, who was part of the GB wheelchair basketball team that won bronze in Athens, said he was "overjoyed" with his selection for his third Paralympics.

He said: "The squad is a real mixture of youth and experience and I believe this year could be a special one for GB, a semi-final placing would be great."

Nathan Milgate, who has been selected for GB's shooting squad, called his selection for Beijing "a great honour". "It will be a

whole new experience for me, being my first Paralympics," he said.

It is believed that about 30 per cent of the athletes selected in this year's squad will be competing at their first Paralympic Games.

Lane said: "It is fantastic to see so many new faces among the athletes chosen for the ParalympicsGB team for this summer, which is testament to how well the sports in Britain have embraced the need to nurture and identify talent."

"The Beijing Games will be a superb spectacle of sport and I look forward to seeing Britain's athletes

step up to the plate to put in some excellent performances to win Britain medals."

The squad features a broad range of ages, with 13-year-olds Eleanor Simmons (swimming) and Hollie Arnold (athletics) named alongside 62-year-old Fred Stevens (archery) and 54-year-old Deanna Coates (shooting).

Other notable names in the squad include wheelchair racer David Weir (*above left*), who will be looking for his first Paralympic gold, and reigning champions athlete Danny Crates (*above right*) and swimmer Natalie Jones.

Disability proves no barrier to Olympic inclusion

Three disabled athletes could be competing among non-disabled counterparts at this summer's Olympic Games in Beijing.

South African swimmer Natalie du Toit has now been confirmed in her

country's swimming squad for the Olympics, where she will compete in the 10km open water event. It is believed she will be the first person to compete in both the Paralympics and Olympic Games.

Moss Mashishi, president of the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee, said Du Toit's achievement

was "tremendous by any standard".

He said: "We are immensely proud of her and I'm not sure if she recognises just how historic it is. She has put our country on the map in a way which has never been done before."

Du Toit's selection means that the South African Olympics squad could contain two disabled

athletes. In May, a court ruled that Oscar Pistorius could compete against non-disabled athletes. He now has until 30 June to meet the qualifying time for the 400m.

Single arm amputee Natalia Partyka will also be competing at the Olympics, representing Poland at table-tennis in the team category.

Q&A: Ian Jones

In the seventh of our Paralympics profiles ahead of Beijing, we put questions to an 18-year-old sprinter specialising in 100m, 200m and 400m events

How did you first get involved in disability sport?

I've always loved sport. I went along to a disability sport event at Sport City in Manchester and it came from there really.

What is your biggest sporting achievement so far?

I'd probably say breaking the European record in the 400m at the Paralympic World Cup back in May

What is your biggest sporting disappointment so far?

I wouldn't say I have any as yet. I'm still young and still training, so hopefully there won't be any.

What are your ambitions for Beijing and beyond?

I'm hoping to get a medal in the 400m. My times so far suggest I'm capable of getting a silver. In the 200m, to run a personal best would be really great, and hopefully make it to the final.

Who are your sporting heroes?

Michael Johnson, Lance Armstrong and anyone who has been through it and knows what it's like to win.

Do you think the GB team is in good shape for the Beijing games, and beyond that, London?

We've got a lot of top class athletes in the squad, so I think we're in good shape.



TONY MARSHALL/EMPICS SPORT/PA PHOTOS

We've also got a good range of old and young, and several under 18s which is obviously good for 2012.

Who is your tip to be the next GB Paralympic star?
Hollie Arnold, who's only

13, is a good friend of mine. She recently broke three records in shot put, discus and javelin.

What are your interests away from sport?
Fishing. I'm a good fisherman.

artsreview

Writing her own story

Sarah Anderson's bookshop featured in *Notting Hill*. As her life story is published, she talks to **Ian Macrae**

Sarah Anderson, who's just written a book on her life, is a mass of contradictions. For a start, the book itself represents something of a u-turn for her.

"For most of my life I've avoided talking about having one arm. I don't think about having one arm. It doesn't affect my life, I do whatever I want."

But the desire to write the book was born out of the way in which she feels she's regarded by other people.

"It's about what other people think is important and I wanted to let other people know what it's like living with one arm."

There are contradictions, too, surrounding her identity as a disabled person. She's on the record as saying that she doesn't regard herself as disabled and yet she often writes like someone who's got the social model tattooed on her soul. And she readily accepts the view that it's society not impairments which disable us.

"I would certainly agree with that. But when I hear the word 'disabled', it means 'un-able', and I



RAY TANG/REX FEATURES



JAMES INNES WILLIAMS

don't reckon that I am 'unable'. I would say that I'm different. That there are certain things I can't do."

As the owner of a famous London travel book shop (above) – the one run by Hugh Grant in the movie *Notting Hill* – she's well

placed to compare attitudes in different cultures.

"People in Britain I find incredibly embarrassed and they get completely tied up in knots. Whereas in America the attitude is far more open."

Exploring people's attitudes towards her reveals another set of contradictions, or maybe it's the same one. Reflecting on a story in the book when a man refused to open a door for her despite

the fact that she was carrying books and had explained to him that she had one arm, she says: "I wish it could make me angry. It doesn't. It makes me very upset."

So why does she get upset rather than angry?

"It's always been very difficult for me to ask for help because I know that I can do most things. So when I do have to ask for help, to have someone refuse it, I'm completely taken aback. I can't deal with it."

I wonder then whether she understands those of us who do sometimes get angry.

"Yes, I do. It's almost as if you're not there as a person. You are your blindness; you are your one-armedness. You're not a person."

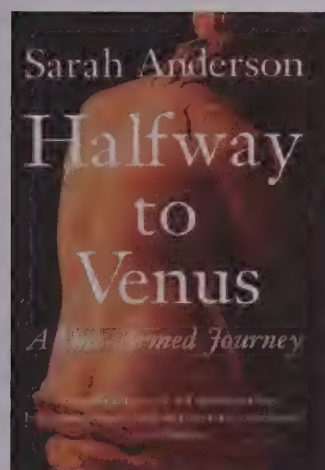
I can't help thinking that, when you get to the core of Sarah Anderson, there is, perhaps, just a kernel of anger and a bit of a sense of injustice, too.

• **Review, page 69**

→ Up-to-the-minute listings

For all the very latest arts listings visit
www.disabilitynow.org.uk/arts

BOOKS

HALFWAY TO VENUS: A ONE-ARMED JOURNEY

A request for assistance cutting up food leads to a jaw-droppingly ignorant comment from an airhostess, "Do you mind being my baby?" Thus Sarah Anderson felt compelled to write about what it's like to live with one arm, in a two-armed world.

You could say Sarah isn't the luckiest person in the world. Her left arm was amputated when she had cancer at 10, later she endured months of immobility after breaking her leg in 26 places in a skiing accident, and an early menopause at 33 dashed any hopes she may have had of having children.

This book is about Sarah's personal struggle to come to terms with becoming an amputee. The difficulty she had with this is hardly surprising when she points

out that nowadays an average of 19 people with different skills help and advise someone after an amputation. Sarah had no-one. Consequently, she lived in "a web of silence" and denial. It took nine years before she finally asked her parents what had happened to her arm.

The book is peppered with literary quotes and interspersed with personal research. At times I found the literary quotes went on a bit and I just wanted to get back to the story. In particular, I was captivated by the push-pull feeling Sarah had – between not wanting to belong to the world of disabled people and the fact that her experiences, eg of social/job discrimination, were undeniably of that world.

Halfway to Venus is Sarah's "search for my 'lost' arm". Her research into the importance, portrayal and cultural significance of hands and arms, and her exploration of the worlds of amputees and disability, gives her a sense of closure, and readers an insight into those worlds which they may not have had before.

Emma Bowler

• *Halfway to Venus: A One-Armed Journey* by Sarah Anderson; Umbrella Books; £12.99; ISBN 978-095426242-6

EXHIBITIONS

**ICTAL PROJECT**

The first of Gus Cummins's prints took my breath away. "Post Ictal" is a series of disjointed, faded, overprinted words in tones of grey, a dialogue between someone post epileptic seizure, confused and desperately trying to remember and the "rescuer" repeating, repeating questions.

Gus Cummins uses tests from neurological diagnosis, transforming them into challenging art. Screenprinted MRI brain scans have an Andy Warhol quality hiding evil grinning faces. An EEG (electroencephalogram) starts calmly and proceeds to the chaos of a seizure, screenprinted in white on black with a quote from Dostoyevsky.

Gus had his first seizure in 1991 and was undiagnosed for years, tested and medicated to the point of exhaustion. His journey through the process of

epileptic diagnosis and the chaos it plays with health and head is a familiar journey for many who call epilepsy a constant companion.

Here's what Gus says about his art: "I look normal. I am ashamed to tell people I have epilepsy. It's restricting my ability to manage my life, but if I don't seek help, no one knows. I decide to learn about epilepsy... I stop hiding my condition and decide to talk about it. I find understanding. I make this exhibition and find pride."

The exhibition is at the Neurosupport Centre in Liverpool until mid-July.

If the purpose of art is to provide a fresh and unexpected look at the world, Gus is going to very exciting places.

Clair Chapwell

• Info@ictal.net
• Read Clair Chapwell's interview with Gus Cummins at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Over 20 nations have ratified
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of Persons with Disabilities.

The UK isn't one of them.

Discrimination against disabled people exists.
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*Standard SMS rate applies. Scope is a registered charity

Time to get equal

scope

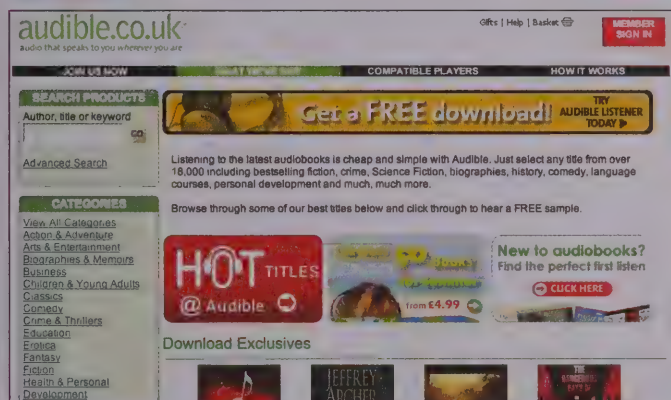
About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

webwatch

Ouch and about



Damon Rose is editor of the BBC's disability website *Ouch!*. We asked him to share some of his favourite web haunts



The web has immeasurably changed my life as a blind person. As a sighted teenager, I spent my Saturdays in book shops. Losing my sight meant I lost lots of cultural and informational input until, 10 years later, the internet came along to fill the void. At this point I'd like to say I now spend all my time reading academic journals and not just Popbitch or Facebook – but I wouldn't be able to live with the lie.

audible.co.uk is a current fave of mine. I love audio books and this is a site full of 'em. Last week I subscribed to one of their packages which allows me to download 2 audio books per month for £14.99 –

bargain. I chose the latest Alex Rider teen-adult crossover spy adventure and something more culturally valid – rapid German learning. Hopefully, I'll be able to speak fluently with my girlfriend's family in Düsseldorf by the time we visit this Christmas. Still not enough 21st century books though. Why do audio book producers think we're only into Jeeves, Agatha Christie or drawing room sagas?

mediaguardian.co.uk keeps me up to date with all the latest new media industry news I need and, if I want more in-depth or fascinating tech or science news, the iconic **wired.com** is still my favourite location. I just read a really interesting story

about a blind telephone hacker, or phreaker.

wikipedia.com is just fantastic. A collaborative encyclopedia contributed to by volunteers around the world, it's a good destination for blind people because it can cut out a lot of time-consuming browsing. Others have done all that work for you and added extra knowledge to boot. It's incredible what you can find there. User beware, though – check a few other sources first before building any info you glean into your essay or scoping document. I was a keen contributor to the pages about Braille but someone kept deleting my inclusions. Possibly my contempt for Braille capital letters rocked the boat. You can't tell. It's the internet. Stalk or be stalked. Oh, and while we're on that, the web does make stalking accessible if you're blind, creating a level playing field for the disabled wannabe criminal – though I don't condone that kind of behaviour.

Disabilitywise, I'm currently hooked on a blog by disabled entrepreneur Rich Donovan, a former Wall Street trader. I met him on a trip to New York last month and he has forthright ideas around employment, inclusion and joined-up-thinking. Forget the social and medical models, Rich has spent quite some time thinking through the 'business model', mocking workplace 'lunch and learn' sessions on diversity, full of people preaching to the converted. It's been talked about before, but he puts acres more meat on the bone around the trillion dollar world economic force that disabled people represent. I used to think I was liberal; does my fascination with this man's website make me a Tory now? Become a disciple at **www.returnondisability.blogspot.com**

Stuff it under your boss's nose, or better yet make a powerpoint presentation that speaks directly to the heart of all that's important in the world and on the web – money and the bottom line.

• **www.bbc.co.uk/ouch**

→ Have your say

- write to us Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW
- email us editor@disabilitynow.org.uk
- phone us 020 7619 7323

worklife

An Action-packed career

Albert Thomson is opening up surprising new job opportunities for disabled people as managing director of Action Amps

Until 2003, I was a fit and active soldier who had served in numerous conflicts from the Gulf War in 1990 to Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Kosovo. But at the start of the Iraq War in 2003, aged 33, I was hit several times by machine-gun fire, resulting in horrific injuries and the loss of my left leg above the knee.

I was hospitalised for two months, during which time I contemplated what the future might hold for me. Realising I was in charge of my own destiny, I started thinking of using amputees to enhance the training of our armed forces and emergency services by creating realistic casualty simulations. I went on to form a company, Action Amps (Amputee Casualty Simulations Ltd).

Members as young as 18 who were born without limbs have since participated in training exercises with the army where the use of special effects make-up helps to create a realistic battlefield situation.

Members find themselves

being tossed around, shot and blown up. The military gain realistic and effective training and the amputee gains a sense of achievement.

More recently, I have also been contacted by film and TV companies keen to use the unique abilities of amputees. As a result, our members have taken part in stunt work in films such as *Troy*, *Gladiator*, *Batman* and, more recently, *Wolfman*. This kind of work is still rare, though, because the UK

Members find themselves being tossed around, shot and blown up

Stunt Register currently only allows registration of non-disabled people. Hopefully, with the media welcoming the use of amputees for an increasingly wide range of work, this will change. But I am also investigating whether I can set up a stunt register for disabled people. So, for example, if there were disabled horse-riders who could fall off a horse, then that could



ACTION AMPS (ACS LTD)

be their speciality.

Despite having no acting experience, I have been involved in some of this work myself. In the last four years, I have secured parts in feature films and dramas and I have also done a few stunts. But there are certain things I cannot do. I would not be able to run about as a man on fire or ride a horse, but I can successfully do high falls and falls through the air resulting from explosions.

I actively encourage disabled people to join as

many extras agencies as possible in an effort to gain maximum exposure to the industry. Hopefully, each individual will then become recognised as a supplier of a unique service.

If anyone is interested in following this line of work, I would be happy to talk to them* and put them in touch with other disabled stuntmen who are already on the path to "stardom".

*** To contact Albert, tel: 01733 869908 or visit www.actionamps.com**

ALBERT THOMSON: CAREER PATH

- 1984 – left Whitburn Academy, West Lothian, at 16
- 1986 – joined the army, aged 18
- 1987 – first posting, to Germany
- 2003 – became colour sergeant
- 2003 – injured in Iraq
- 2005 – founded Action Amps

FOR SALE - Tel: 020 7619 7336,

Fax: 020 7619 7331, Minicom: 020 7619 7332, email:
patrick.durhammatthews@disabilitynow.org.uk

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FORD FOCUS ZETEC 1.6, light blue, e/windows and e/mirrors, pas, diesel, air con. Brig-Ayd controls incl hoist. Carries 5 including wheelchair. Registered May 2006 (06 plate), 16.5k miles, one owner and fsh, £9,900 ono. Tel: **01633 894810** (Newport, Gwent) or jbh@tssmarketing.co.uk

MERCEDES VITO 1.8 Tdi, 2002 (02 plate), metallic silver and colour coded bumpers, 53,700 miles, air con, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, rear privacy glass, alarm, front passenger airbag. Wheelchair conversion by Widnes Car Centre Ltd incl RICON hydraulic tail lift, nearside side-step and grab rails. Carries 6 with a wheelchair. Only one owner from new, regularly serviced with fsh, full MOT, asking £7,500 ono. Tel: **01759 307994** (York) or mobile: **07736 381198**.

CITROEN BERLINGO FORTE, Silver, 1.9 diesel, pas, registered May 01 (Y Plate), 27k miles. With full Brotherwood lowered floor conversion incl 57" headroom and standard one piece counter balanced ramp. Seats 3 including wheelchair or powered chair. Fsh, MOT, vgc, £3,900 ono. Tel: **01223871609** (Cambridge) or mobile: **07748166858**.

CITROEN BERLINGO 1.4 2001 (X reg), CD player, pas, Poseidon Blue Metallic. With wheelchair conversion incl tailgate, carries 4 including wheelchair. Only 22k miles, full MOT until Jan 2009 and one owner from new, fsh, asking only £3,250 for quick sale. Tel: **01530 457091** (Leics) or email: rocketron39@ntlworld.com

NISSAN PRAIRIE XL 2.4, cherry red, auto, 94k miles, M reg, pas, new battery. With Brotherwood Wheelchair Conversion incl rear ramp and inertia belts. Carries 5 including wheelchair, 10 months' MOT, in very good condition, £1,995 ono. Tel: **0115 9533834** (Nottingham).

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FORD FOCUS ZETEC 1.6, 3,400 miles, Aquarius Blue, December 2005 (55 plate), only one owner from new, fsh. Climate control, pas, e/windows and e/mirrors, CD player. With Carchair wheelchair conversion by Constables for front passenger. £11,850 ono for car and powerchair. Tel: **01242 603374** or email: fafwright@tiscali.co.uk

RENAULT KANGOO 1.5 DCi Mobility conversions for wheelchair. Oct.2006. Only 5570 miles with lowered floor and a special floor lowering system. Fold down lightweight ramp and wheelchair restraint belts. Has air conditioning and is in first class condition throughout. Transferable manufacturer's warranty until Oct. 2009. £7,850. Tel: **01777 707843** (Notts) or e-mail: john@taylors-online.org

WHEELCHAIRS/SCOOTERS

ENIGMA ENERGY POWERCHAIR, black, dual control (attendant or user) bought May 2006, unused since August 2007, insured until May 2009. With kerb climber, anti-tip wheels, adjustable armrests. With all relevant paperwork, asking only £500 for quick sale. Tel: **020 8958 7996** (Edgeware, Middx).

CONT'D SEE PAGE 76

RECRUITMENT

Leonard Cheshire Disability campaigns to change attitudes to disability, supporting 21,000 disabled people in the UK.

careerability

We rely on our volunteers and staff to achieve our ambitious goals which is why we need you. If you are looking for a new challenge we currently have vacancies for staff across the UK in a variety of roles - from support staff to managers, and administrators to fundraisers.

And if you're not seeking work then why not become a Leonard Cheshire Disability Volunteer. As a disabled person your experience and insight will be particularly valued.

If you're interested in changing attitudes to disability and supporting other disabled people then visit www.LCDisability.org

Image reproduced from the "Creature Discomforts" disability awareness campaign www.CreatureDiscomforts.org

Leonard Cheshire Disability charity no: 218186 (England & Wales) and no: SCO05117 (Scotland)



Leonard Cheshire Disability

DO YOU WANT TO WORK AS A CREW MEMBER ON FILM AND TELEVISION PRODUCTIONS?**Changing Technologies for New Entrants**

Recruitment has now opened for a new 44 week scheme, thanks to the support of Skillset's TV Freelance Fund and Film Skills Fund.

This is paid apprenticeship-style new entrant training to prepare people for freelance employment in film and television production in the following departments:

Art, Camera, Edit, Makeup/hair, Production, Props, Script supervision, Sound, Wardrobe.

For further information and application forms, please visit our website www.ft2.org.uk or send an A4 s.a.e, clearly marked with the job you wish to apply for to: **FT2, 3rd floor, 18-20 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1TJ.**

Closing date for applications: 12 noon on 31 July 2008.

FT2 has a strong equal opportunities policy and particularly welcomes applications from people from ethnic minority backgrounds and people with disabilities.

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For more information on the roles or to request an application pack please contact; Clare Kiely, **0207 934 9549**, Fax **0207 934 9539**, clare.kiely@londoncouncils.gov.uk or visit the grants section of the London councils website, www.londoncouncils.gov.uk Application packs are available in alternative formats, video and audio submissions will be accepted.

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Leonard Cheshire Disability

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For further details please contact: Kevin Parkes email **Kevin.parkes@LCDisability.org** or telephone **0207 732 0208**.

RECRUITMENT

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PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

Trustee Appointments

Scope's mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve real equality. With a turnover approaching £100 million, Scope campaigns to banish disablism and works alongside disabled people, especially people with cerebral palsy, to develop support and services that help them have choice and control over their lives.

Trustees

Following a governance review in 2007, an Interim transitional Trustee board was established in February 2008. A permanent trustee board comprising members of the transitional board and some new trustees is now being set up to be operational in October 2008.

Experience

We are particularly keen to identify more trustees with senior level experience in the design, delivery and commissioning of education, employment and social care services used by disabled people and their families that includes in-depth understanding of the challenges facing service providers in this increasingly changing market.

We are also keen to attract people with expertise in financial management, compliance or business development preferably gained in a large, complex organisation.

Understanding

Ideally you will also have personal experience of disability and we are especially keen to hear from disabled people or their relatives.

These roles are unpaid but reasonable travel and expenses will be paid.

If you would like to help Scope achieve its mission please send your CV and a covering letter or request an information pack from Susan Bell at

sue.bell@scope.org.uk or by post to Susan Bell, Secretary to the Board, at Scope, 6 Market Road, London, N7 9PW.
Telephone 020 7619 7171.

Information is also available at www.scope.org.uk/jobs

Deadline for applications is 2 July 2008

Time to get equal

scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

RECRUITMENT



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 Transporter bike by Van Raam. For use with majority of wheelchairs, 5 gears, split frame O-pair with power assistance, rear disc brake, front hydraulic brakes, battery lighting, 1 year old, excellent condition, hardly used. Bought for £6,000 asking £3,500 ovno Tel: **01763838861** or email: **kazmum2boys@aol.com**

PERSONAL

MAN, 56, 5 ft 7", bisexual, single, hair and beard now turning silvery grey, brain tumour 1967, seeks new friends, I'd pay for pub and restaurant bills, front row theatre tickets, taxi fares etc. Box no: **DN011**

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**the disability employment
advisory committee**

DWP Department for
Work and Pensions

The Department is inviting applications for new DEAC Members...

to the Committee to enable it to continue providing advice to government, from a diverse and balanced perspective, on disability employment issues. We particularly wish to encourage applicants from black and minority ethnic groups and disabled people. We would welcome applications from, but not exclusively, employers and providers of disability services, the public and private sectors, trade unions, disability organisations and from across GB, particularly Scotland and Wales.

The Disability Employment Advisory Committee (DEAC) is a nationally (GB) focussed committee established in 2002 to:

- offer strategic advice to DWP Ministers and officials about the employment of disabled people; and
- advise on the labour market barriers disabled people face across Great Britain;

- develop recommendations about the support needed to overcome these barriers; and
- give confidential advice about the effectiveness of labour market policies and programmes, focusing on: specialist and mainstream programmes, retention and rehabilitation measures and employment advice for disabled people, including delivery of programmes by Jobcentre Plus.

Applicants must:

- have an awareness and appreciation of the concerns of disabled people within employment;
- be able to comment on policy proposals and research; and
- have good communication and interpersonal skills and be able to work as part of a team.

We would like applicants to:

- be able to undertake projects and occasional public engagements if required;
- have credibility with disability organisations and others; and
- have some knowledge of Jobcentre Plus Welfare to Work programmes.

The posts are on a voluntary basis, but an amount for loss of earnings will be paid where appropriate and relevant expenses will be reimbursed. Members are appointed for a term of three years and attend at least three main meetings a year, with occasional additional meetings and events totalling approximately 20 days per year.

If you have any questions about DEAC and being a Committee Member, or you want further information and application details, please telephone 0114 267 7242 (Typetalk calls welcomed) or write to DEAC Secretariat, DWP, W10d Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ or email: Richard.Parker4@dwp.gsi.gov.uk Information is available in alternative formats and on our website: www.deac.org.uk The closing date for receipt of applications is 17 July 2008.

A large print version of this advert is available.



WARNING

We have been warned about a scam involving people from overseas who say they want to buy a product and who offer to pay using cheques, Western Union money transfers and certified cheques. Although no *Disability Now* readers to our knowledge have been hit by this, please be particularly wary of accepting cheques from overseas. For more information, visit the Metropolitan Police website.

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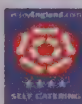
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Beware the breakfast mugger

It's time to turn the tables on pestering strangers, says **Paul Carter**. From now on, they'll have to pay to hear his life story

Why won't people leave me alone? Apologies for the slightly anti-social introduction to this month's musings, but you'll perhaps be unsurprised to learn that I've been pestered again.

This latest in a long-line of irritating social interactions came while I was living it up in a hotel in Manchester (if you can exactly call a Travel Inn "living it up"), with the purpose of watching four days of top-class sport, all in the line of Disability Now-related duty. Hard work, journalism.

I was queuing for breakfast, to be precise. It was one of those buffet-style breakfasts, where the food sits in those big metal tins under a 40-watt bulb, pleading for clemency.

"Did you have an accident?" asked the suited and booted middle-aged man behind me.

"No, I think it's the eggs," I replied.

He looked a bit puzzled, which served him right, I thought.

I stood there for a second or two basking in the glow



MARTIN LEE/REX FEATURES

of smugness from my rather sharp wit, which to be honest is something that happens a lot.

Irritatingly, complete strangers asking randomly personal questions happens a lot, too, although I have to say, not usually at 7am on a Saturday morning in the breakfast queue at a Travel Inn.

"The clever ones usually only ask questions once they've offered to help in some way"

Very little usually happens to me at 7am on a Saturday morning. Very little at all.

Anyhow, before I had the chance to concoct another

witty reposte for my own amusement, he'd already offered to help me with my beans, which in this instance was not a euphemism.

Being so early in the morning, I wanted to get the usual charade of politely revealing my life history over and done with quickly, so I could sit down and shovel my plate of carbohydrates into my already burgeoning face, and set about hardening my arteries for the day before going to watch some elite athletics.

No, the irony was not lost on me.

So we went through the usual polite question and answer session.

At this point, I always have to resist concocting some elaborate story

involving a great white shark or how I lost my arms single-handedly clearing Ebola-filled landmines from an orphanage on a leper colony.*


After he'd buggered off to eat his own breakfast (thankfully he didn't sit with me; I'm not that tolerant), it left me thinking about the tactics used by these people.

The clever ones, like this particular breakfast mugger, usually only ask questions once they've offered to help in some way, like it's some sort of perverse icebreaker.

I'm thinking I could turn it into some kind of little sideline. After all, with the current economic climate (sorry, but I refuse to use the term "credit crunch"; it's on a par with "road rage" and "carbon footprint"), I could use some extra beer money.

Personal question? Five quid. Personal measurement? 20 quid. Hell, for 50 quid I'll show you. I'll be a millionaire by Christmas. Ta Ta.

**I didn't, in case you were wondering. If you want to know how, it'll cost you. Cheques to the usual address.*



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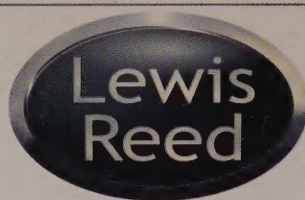
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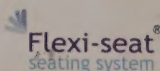
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